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THE

VAY OF SALVATION.

BY

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"These men are the servants of the Most High God, which show unto us the way of salvation."—*Acts of the Apostles.*

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PREFACE.

The actual condition of mankind as sinners, under the law; the true character of Messiah; the fulness, and perfection, of the satisfaction to divine justice made by him on behalf of transgressors; the manner in which his redemption is applied to the deliverance of the fallen and lost; justification by faith through Christ; the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, and sanctification; and the relations subsisting between vital and practical religion; are topics of unspeakable importance. Without a competent knowledge of what they teach, how can we know God, or ourselves, or rationally hope for eternal life? Every one it would seem, would be eager to study, and careful rightly to understand them. Regarding no subjects however, are men generally, so careless, and so dull of apprehension! How disinclined are they to yield to them their minds, or their hearts! Successfully to impart instruction to the masses respecting them, a pastorship now continued uninterruptedly, through a quarter of a century, has fully convinced me is exceedingly difficult. "Line upon line" is necessary; "precept upon precept," perpetually repeated! How fearful is this condition of things! It is especially so when we consider how readily the multitudes listen to error, and with what facility they are deceived, and led astray regarding the way of salvation. And when delusions are embraced, and firmly believed, what can be expected but results the most fatal? The impenitent remain

careless, because they do not see the danger to which they are exposed; the awakened never submit themselves to the Redeemer, not perceiving the principles upon which alone they are pardoned, and accepted; and even the religious are involved in snares, perplexities, and miseries. Truth is the basis of holiness; truth sealed upon the heart by the Holy Spirit. By the truth we are delivered, enlightened, and sanctified.

Often, and deeply, have I felt the need of some suitable works, calling attention strongly, to the infallible teachings of the word of God, especially on the several points considered in the following pages. Many of my brethren, both lay and clerical, have doubtless felt as I have. We have earnestly desired to follow up by such means, our discourses, admonitions, and conversations. Carefully prepared treatises afford most important aid to the study of divine revelation, and with the blessing of God, may be attended with the happiest consequences. I have looked around me for such books as I desired, but they are not to be found! Owen on "*Forgiveness*," and Hodge on "*The Way of Life*," are probably the best. These, and other similar works, contain many scriptural truths, well expressed. If it were proper to publish "expurgated editions," they might be very useful. As they now are I never could conscientiously place any of them, in the hands of inquirers, nor recommend them to my friends, without many reservations, and cautions, because in even the best of them, truth is constantly mingled with errors of various kinds, and sometimes errors of the most serious character. After mature deliberation I determined to attempt myself, the composition of such a work as

I conceived desirable. To the accomplishment of this task the hours not otherwise necessarily occupied, have for the last six months, been sedulously devoted. The doctrines and duties inculcated I firmly believe to be scriptural, and such as all Christians are bound to embrace and practise. I am not conscious of having employed a single text of the word of God in any other than its correct sense, nor of having used one argument which I do not think legitimate and conclusive. I have industriously sought to impart the plain truth, in the plainest possible manner, avoiding all abstruse criticisms, and labored discussions.

I will only add, that in all I have here written, I have had mainly in view the benefit of serious inquirers, and young Christians. I trust however, that readers of all classes may be able to derive from the perusal of the volume some advantages. Its preparation has cost me some labor, but it has also afforded me, in the review of "first principles," much improvement, and many hours of the purest spiritual delight. If it should prove instrumental in pointing out more clearly, "*the way of salvation*" to those into whose hands it may fall, who are anxious to know, to believe, and to obey the truth, my highest hopes will have been attained. May God, in his infinite mercy, accompany this effort to do good, with his rich and abundant blessing. Amen.

ROBT. BOYTE C. HOWELL.

Nashville, Tenn., March 28th, 1849.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

The favor with which this work has been received by the public has fully equalled my warmest expectations. My sole object has been to disseminate the truth on the most important of all subjects. In preparing it for a second edition, I have re-examined its pages with care, and while I have made some improvements, which I flatter myself will render it still more useful to the reader, my convictions are strengthened that all the principles it teaches are in strict accordance with the word of God. I again send it forth with my earnest prayers that our Heavenly Father may render it a still richer blessing to my brethren, and fellow-citizens.

ROBT. BOYTE C. HOWELL.

Richmond, Va., August 2d, 1850.

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THE WAY OF SALVATION.

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CHAPTER I.

THE SCRIPTURES REVEAL THE WAY OF SALVATION.

Definition of salvation; all men desire salvation; knowledge is required; the Scriptures impart all necessary information; their character, and sufficiency; they are our only guide; the duty of every man to study them, to understand them, and to obey them.

SALVATION is infinitely the most momentous subject that ever engaged the thoughts of men. It unfolds the most signal manifestations of the glory of God, and confers upon us every blessing of which we are capable. It embraces in its wide grasp the interests connected with our souls, and our bodies, in both worlds. Not alone our deliverance from sin, and from all the consequences of sin, does it concern, but also every endowment necessary to make us forever perfect and happy. It raises us from the depths of misery into which we have all so calamitously fallen, and exalts us to companionship with angels in the skies. The saved are beyond the reach of evil. Pain and sorrow are no more. They are crowned with glory, and honor, and immortality, and eternal life! Who can contemplate salvation without the profoundest emotion? Who can adequately conceive of its magnitude, its boundless blessedness?

The desire to be happy, both here and hereafter, is ardently cherished by every rational being. No one ever yet willingly consented to be miserable, even for a short period, unless as-

sured that thereby some great ultimate good could be secured. But to be miserable *forever*, to be overwhelmed with sufferings which can have no mitigation, nor end, to be withered, blasted, ruined eternally, O, the very thought is horrible! The bare possibility of such a fate sends a shuddering and dismay through every fibre of the soul! Everlasting death! No man, in the proper exercise of his reason, ever deliberately determined to brave its terrors. No matter how depraved men may be; no matter how entire the sway which the world may have gained over their hearts' best affections; no matter how determined to gratify the desires of the carnal mind; no matter how intense their dislike of holiness, and of the obedience which the Redeemer enjoins: none intend to bring upon themselves final destruction. The solicitations to present joys they cannot resist, but mean time they anxiously look for, and confidently expect to find, some way of escape from the consequences, the portentous threatenings of which often give them terrible apprehensions. Millions, still in full pursuit of earthly delights, are suddenly surprised, stricken down by the destroyer, and hurried to the dark caverns of woe. Yet until their last moment, the desire to be saved clings to them with unyielding tenacity. But, alas! with the conditions of salvation—this is the fatal difficulty—they cannot, they will not comply. If we would be saved—and I rejoice in the assurance that it is the high privilege of all who seek salvation—the conditions must command our thoughts, and receive our unqualified assent, and obedience.

But how are we to be saved? Whither shall we look? "What shall we do?" These very inquiries, so natural, so appropriate, are of themselves, ample proof that *knowledge* is necessary. He who knows nothing of the way of salvation, never can be saved. I do not now allude to idiots, who have not enjoyed the power of reason, nor to those who die in infancy. All such, without reference to any mental or moral action, are sanctified, and saved, by a direct exercice of the

grace of God. Such instances, however, are exceptions to the general rule by which the divine government is administered. Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, as respects all those who have reached the years of discretion, and responsibility, is a primary condition of life. But no man can believe in Christ, unless he know something of Christ. "How shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard?"* "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."† We must have knowledge, and, thanks to the benevolence of our heavenly Father, its sources are ample, and accessible to us all. Does any one inquire how much knowledge is demanded? The Scriptures, I answer, do not fix any definite amount, as requisite to qualify us believingly to receive Christ. For those whose faculties are just beginning to open, or who labor under mental weaknesses of any kind, the measure which is indispensable must be very small. While on the one hand, the pride of intellect, and learning, under the blinding influences of depravity, often close the heart to the entrance of divine wisdom, on the other, "a faint ray imparted from the fountain of light," and accompanied by the Holy Spirit, is sufficient, notwithstanding every opposing influence, to guide the humble and contrite, safely to the attainment of eternal life.

I may now remark, that the sources of knowledge to which I allude are *the Scriptures. They reveal fully and perfectly the way of salvation.* In them, and in them only, we have infallible instructions. How wondrous that blessed book, in which they are contained! God himself is the author, and the subject is "God, and man, and salvation." It was given us,—

> "By prophets, seers, priests, and sacred bards,
> Evangelists, apostles, men inspired,

---

* Rom. x. 14. † John xvii. 3.

And by the HOLY GHOST anointed, set
Apart, and consecrated to declare
To earth, the counsels of the ETERNAL ONE."

To what other quarter may we look, but to the Scriptures, for knowledge? He only who conceived the design, is able to make known the plan of our deliverance. Nor is there in his holy word, either defect, or redundancy.

But does the doubt arise whether the Bible be really the word of God? Heaven forbid that such misgivings should visit any sincere and intelligent mind. Every one knows, who has given himself the trouble to think on the subject, that the light of nature and of reason, all man's vaunted philosophy, and research, are utterly insufficient to teach the way of salvation. Valuable as learning is to instruct us in other departments of life, here it gives us no lessons. It is wholly silent. Destitute of a revelation from God, what do we know of his moral attributes? Can we tell what kind of worship is acceptable to him, whether he demands "the fruit of our body for the sin of our soul,"* or will receive the homage of sincere hearts? Who can determine any thing regarding his own destiny beyond the present world? Our whole race is covered with a dark mantle of utter hopelessness!

No one, I imagine, doubts that God can, if he please, make a revelation to man, of all that it may be necessary for us to know, nor that he can do so in such a way as to render unquestionable both the nature, and source of the intelligence. Be it also remembered, that he is infinitely benevolent, and will certainly do for his creatures, whatever their happiness may demand.

Let these and other considerations, which brevity forbids me even to mention, be properly weighed, and then let it be decided whether the conclusion is reasonable that our heavenly Father has given us no revelation. Has he with indifference, seen us perishing for want of knowledge, and sternly

* Micah vi. 7.

refused to impart it? Does he take pleasure in the ravages of ignorance and death, of which we must all have been the helpless victims? It is impossible. Far from us be the injurious thought. The bare supposition would be a monstrous imputation upon the divine character. God *has* placed in our hands an ample and glorious revelation of himself.

The Bible, I have already suggested, claims to be that revelation. It contains, unmutilated and pure, all that it is necessary for us to know of things divine. And is the claim in question legitimate? Is it accompanied by such testimonies of its credibility as are conclusive, and satisfactory? I shall not stop here to enter into the argument, nor is it necessary, but will merely observe that the Bible is, in all respects, precisely such a communication as we might have anticipated from the fountain of boundless benevolence. The character of the men who were inspired to deliver it; the motives by which they must have been actuated in their great office; the moral bearing of the record; the consideration that it gives the only truly rational account of God, and of man, of time and of eternity; the nature of its laws, its doctrines, and its ethics; the appeal which it always makes to the higher qualities of our nature; the adaptation to our actual condition and necessities, of the provisions for salvation there made known; the tendency of the religion which it teaches, to promote the universal happiness of our race; all these, and many other similar reasons, demonstrate as completely as any moral truth is capable of being demonstrated, that the Bible is the Word of God, and that it is divinely inspired. And then its facts throughout, both preparatory and subsequent to the amazing offering of our Lord Jesus Christ, are certified to us by the corroborated, uncontradictory, and uncontradicted testimony, of thousands who saw them, and heard them, who were intelligent, observant, and who could not have been deceived. The proof is such as to place them absolutely beyond question.

The *authenticity* also of its several parts, is sustained by considerations perfectly conclusive. The glorious Bible bears in every feature, legibly enstamped, the "image and superscription" of Almighty God. Doubt on this subject is wholly unreasonable. And for what has he given us these holy oracles? For what could he have given them, but to teach us "THE WAY OF SALVATION?"

We may next consider whether, in the hands of men of ordinary intelligence, the Scriptures are of themselves, a sufficient guide. Can we derive from them alone, all the knowledge necessary to lead us to heaven? Will any one defend the opposite proposition? The Scriptures *not* a sufficient guide! Do *not* impart sufficient knowledge! Where, or to whom, shall we look for guidance, or information, on this subject, not contained in God's holy word? Shall we turn to our fellow man? Might we ask of angels? None of them can give us even the smallest light. The Scriptures do *not* reveal plainly, and fully, the way of salvation! Does any man maintain this dogma? If so, how will he support it? Can he prove that instruction in addition to what God has given, is needed by any class of men? How does he know this? How can any one know it? If it is needed, he who has made the discovery must, before he did so, have ascertained also what knowledge indispensable to us, the Bible has omitted. Who dare take a position so full of arrogance as this pretension involves? The Scriptures *not* reveal fully, and plainly, the way of salvation! To what facts, or doctrines, or duties then, do the alleged imperfections pertain? Whence is the deficient knowledge to be derived? Where found this necessary supplement to the revelation from heaven? Why did God neglect to communicate these certain portions of intelligence? With whom has he lodged the authority to supply them? Does the Bible any where, intimate, in the remotest terms, its own incompleteness? Is it competent for men calling themselves

the Church of Christ, or ministers of the Gospel, or men of any class, or of any office, to assume, collectively, or individually, by legislation, by canons, or in any other manner, to supply the imagined deficiencies in that knowledge which the omniscient and infinitely gracious God has revealed? Why then, has he denounced beforehand, any attempt to add to the word of life, or to diminish ought from it, as heaven-daring presumption, fraught with equal sin and danger? Preposterous! The Scriptures are full, they are perfect, they are sufficient.

We may be told however, that no deficiency in divine revelation is pretended, that the difficulty is not here, but that the minds of men are ignorant and dark, and cannot, without certain helps, comprehend its teachings! To secure therefore, the salutary results for which it was designed, authoritative interpretations, and expositions, are held to be essential, such as are furnished by glosses, Church Standards, and other formularies, prepared by those who bear rule, and vouched to the people as correct and orthodox. All this may appear very specious. But where, I will inquire, has God in his word, intimated the importance of any thing of this kind? Where has he suggested the benefit of any such intervention between the people and the Bible? Has the Omniscient failed to make himself intelligible? Can he not speak to his own creatures, without an interpreter? Isolated passages there may be, and doctrines, difficult to be explained, but these involve nothing essential to salvation. I grant also, that ignorance of the word of God, and perversions of its meaning, are by far, the most prolific sources of the many religious evils that have afflicted our world in every age. But these have their seat, not in our mental incapacity, but in the corruptions of our depraved natures, and are not therefore, averted by authorized commentaries of whatever character. Men every where, are strongly disposed to turn away from the divine teachings, and to lean

to their own understanding. They are prone "to correct the diction of the Spirit by that of the party." Thus while they destroy others, they are themselves blinded, and led away hopelessly, from the truth.

The Bible was professedly revealed for the instruction of men of ordinary powers, and attainments. To such it constantly appeals: "O ye simple, understand wisdom."* "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple."† It is placed in our hands to give "the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; to give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge, and discretion."‡ And can it be that it is generally obscure, and too abstruse for such minds to penetrate? Timothy, with the teachings of his mother, and grandmother only, "from a child knew the Holy Scriptures."§ Tell me not then, of the necessity of notes, and comments. The Scriptures, without any such accompaniments, are capable of being comprehended sufficiently, by all classes. Let me not however, be understood as repudiating expositions of the word of God, notes, glosses, exegeses, systems of theology, confessions of faith, or treatises of any kind upon religion. Many of them are valuable in a high degree, and often give to the serious inquirer after truth, the most important assistance. Still it must be remembered, that they are all human productions, the wisest and best of which are imperfect. God forbid that any of us should close our eyes upon the glorious sun of revelation, and make these flickering tapers, these glowworm compositions our guides. No man can be assured that he is safe, but when directed by the clear and certain light emitted from the throne of the Eternal. The desire for salvation must be guided by knowledge, which is imparted in all its extent, and embodied in the Scriptures. They are inspired, true, au-

* Prov. viii. 5.
† Psalms cxix. 130.
‡ Prov. i. 3, 4.
§ 2 Tim. iii. 15.

thentic, the word of God, infallible. They are plain, and level to the comprehension of the common mind. Human productions may be excellent, or they may be mischievous. But God's word cannot deceive us. It portrays truly, the character of Jehovah, and of man, of sin, and of holiness. It sets before us, with glowing distinctness, life and death, and great eternity. It is

> "——— The only star
> By which the bark of man could navigate
> The sea of life, and gain the coast of bliss
> Securely."

The actual achievements, in the hands of the Holy Spirit, of the word of God, unaccompanied by any human helps, are such in ten thousand instances, as leave no doubt of its sufficiency to conduct us truly, and certainly, to the inheritance of the righteous. It has made its appeal resistlessly, to the understanding, and to the heart; it has convinced men of their sin, their danger, and the hopelessness of deliverance by any human means; and it has sent them to our Lord Jesus Christ, in whose great satisfaction to divine justice, received by faith, they have found pardon, and sanctification, and immortal glory. By that holy word, the hard and impenitent heart has been softened, the impetuous passions have been restrained, the ferocious temper subdued, and the soul sweetly constrained to devote itself to the praise and honor of our adorable Redeemer. With this only for his guide, the Christian has walked in paths of pleasantness and peace, looked uncharmed, and unseduced, upon all the delights of this world, has conquered death, the last enemy, and borne up with holy fortitude, in the hour of dissolution, the released spirit has triumphantly scaled the battlements of heaven.

My object in these chapters, permit me, in conclusion, to remark, is to solicit attention to the oracles of God, and to trace with carefulness, and set forth as plainly as possible, their saving instructions. I approach them with, as I trust,

the profoundest reverence, but also with unshaken confidence. They are to be our only guide in all the investigations through which we may pass. Will you accompany me in this survey? Let the fervent prayer ascend from our hearts: O Lord, aid me by thy Spirit, that I may understand the Scriptures; "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."* Wisdom thus solicited, will unveil to us her rich treasures, more precious than gold. We shall obtain "a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path"† through all the gloom of this dark world. Faithfully, as we proceed, let us apply the truths of heaven, to our own heart, and life, fervently imploring the aid of divine grace, and the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, to preserve us from every influence that might withdraw us from the Scriptures, and to prepare us to study them with fidelity, to believe them unwaveringly, and to give them our entire, hearty, and perpetual obedience.

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* Psalm cxix. 18. † Psalm cxix. 105.

CHAPTER II.

MAN BY NATURE, IS FALLEN, DEPRAVED, SINFUL, LOST.

The fall of man a reality; voluntary character of the act by which he fell; his sin; his depravity; all his descendants depraved, and sinful; the nature and extent of depravity; depravity no apology for transgression; the corrupt life of men; by nature lost.

Man, by nature, is fallen, depraved, sinful, lost!

And is the moral condition of our race, really thus desperate? If so, it is indeed most melancholy! Cannot man, as he is naturally, be saved? God in his holy revelation assures us that he cannot, and reason approves, painful as it is, the appalling decision. How, by what means, when, could we have been thrown into a condition so fearfully dangerous? Wisdom admonishes us carefully to survey the ground we occupy. Nor, since the sacred word is open before us, need we err in our investigations.

Let us look into the moral condition of mankind by nature.

What is it? Divine truth teaches us that our original ancestors violated the Law of God. That holy law guarded their innocence, and protected their spiritual life. Thus they voluntarily fell from their pristine purity, into a state of sin, and condemnation. Of this act the unhappy consequences were their own depravity and death, and the depravity, sinfulness, and death, of all their descendants! In this single transaction, we have unveiled to us the source of all our woes, temporal, spiritual, and eternal.

In some quarters however, the correctness of this view of the subject is warmly contested. Learned and persevering efforts have been employed to sustain the opinion, that the whole narrative of the temptation and apostacy in Eden, is

not a history of literal events, but a mere *allegory*, "an instructive mythos," a fiction! Can this assumption be true? It is impossible. Let a candid examination be made of these events, as recorded by Moses,* and they will of themselves, give conclusive proof that it is to be received as *genuine history*, and interpreted according to its literal import. The narrative of the fall is part of a continuous account of the first ages, which extends through the whole of the Pentateuch. Its real historical character is evident from the fact that all the remainder of the Pentateuch, or five books of Moses, is acknowledged to be true history, but from the general character of *the whole*, this *part* is in no manner distinguished. The account of the fall cannot therefore, be taken as an allegory, and the remainder as true literal history. *All* is true, or *all* is fable, since it is all alike. Is the account of the fall a fiction? Then so is the account of the flood a fiction, and also the account of the family of Abraham, of the sojourn in Egypt, and of the emigration to Canaan through the wilderness! All is fiction! But who is so blind as to pretend that such conclusions are reasonable? The remainder of the five books is literal history. This all intelligent men admit. The fact is too certain to allow of any doubt, or question. But if so, it is equally certain that the narrative of the apostacy of our first parents is also a literal history. This cannot be denied, without at the same time, violating all the principles of literary criticism, and of common sense.

It must, in addition, be further observed, that all the subsequent inspired writers speak of the narrative of the fall as a *true literal history*. This certainly, they never could have done had it not been justly entitled to that character. Hear their declarations upon the subject. "Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

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* Genesis iii.

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."* Again. "I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."† And again. "Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived; but the woman being deceived, was in the transgression."‡ Still more fully. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. For until the law, sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one, many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift; for the judgment was by one, to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences, unto justification. For if by one man's offence, death reigned by one, much more they who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men unto condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."§ By these and many similar inspired affirmations, in the Old Testament and in the New, made by prophets, and apostles, and by our Lord Jesus Christ himself, it must be clearly seen, that *they* did not regard the fall as an allegory. Nor did they refer to it for mere rhetorical illustration, or as a matter of classical elegance. On the contrary they made it the basis of earnest,

* 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22.
† 2 Cor. xi. 3.
‡ 1 Tim. ii. 14.
§ Rom. v. 12-18.

oft repeated, and peculiarly energetic reasoning, in which they embodied some of the most important doctrines of Christian revelation, social order, and religious duty. Is it after all a sheer mythological fiction? Such a supposition amounts to no less than a bold charge against all the inspired writers, since in this matter they could not have been deceived, of the grossest and most cruel trifling! Is the history in question not literally true? Then the whole Bible is but a "cunningly devised fable," and all religion, a mere dream of the fancy! Such absurdities can, by no learning, or ingenuity, be rendered probable. The history of the fall of our first parents is therefore, a literal, most melancholy and appalling truth. Their defection, induced by the arts of Satan, brought upon them the curse of God, destroyed the divine image in which they were created, and made them the victims of pain, disease, and death. Total moral disorder arose and reigned.

> "Earth felt the wound; and nature from her seat,
> Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe
> That all was lost."

Another opinion however, is entertained by a certain class of persons, who *admit the reality* of the primal apostacy, which is not less injurious in its influence, nor less contrary to truth than that we have now refuted. It is that the fall of our first parents was an event predetermined by God; that it occurred of necessity; and therefore, since it was impossible for them to have done otherwise, that they were comparatively irresponsible. They conclude, consequently, that the offence was venial, and the guilt of the act trivial. But can this hypothesis be true? Far from it. Man was created a free moral agent, *liable* indeed, to fall, yet fully *able* to stand. Than this the Bible teaches no doctrine more clearly. Of the angels that sinned, and of our first parents also, has the greatest of England's poets most truly, and most sublimely sung:—

"Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell.
Not free, what proof could they have given sincere,
Of true allegiance, constant faith, or love,
Where only what they needs must do appeared,
Not what they would? What praise could they receive,
What pleasure *God*, from such obedience paid,
When will and reason, (reason also is choice,)
Useless and vain, of freedom both despoiled,
Made passive both, had served necessity,
Not *God?* They therefore, as to right belonged,
So were created, nor can justly accuse
Their Maker, or their making, or their fate,
As if predestination overruled
Their will disposed by absolute decree,
Or high foreknowledge. They themselves decreed
Their own revolt, not *God*. If God foreknew,
Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault,
Which had no less proved certain unforeknown."

No further remark is necessary to show that, in their melancholy apostacy the parents of mankind acted freely, and without restraint.

We now turn to view this subject from another point of light. We look over the moral condition of the whole human family, and here a most important and striking fact, instantly arrests our attention. All men are, and have been, personally, and actually, sinners against God; all, in every age, and in every nation; "All have sinned."* "There is no man, who sinneth not."† "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."‡ With such teachings the whole Book of God abounds. And that they are true, is emphatically attested by the events which are every day occurring around us. *Death* reigns universally. But why should this destroyer have power over us *all?* Is death the lot of any holy being? Never. It is the dreadful sentence inflicted upon sin; and how appalling that sentence is, the heart of every man can readily testify. To holiness, and obedience, the approval of Jehovah is always extended. Upon the pure and good, no punishment is ever laid by a righteous God. Therefore, did all men bear this character,

* Rom. iii. 23. † 2 Chron. vi. 36. ‡ 1 John i. 10.

no man could suffer death, or any other evil. But disease, and affliction, are perpetually raging, and all men die. Therefore all men are sinners against God.

The universal prevalence of sin is shown by numerous other unanswerable arguments. To a few only of these I am permitted now briefly to allude. Why is it, if sin does not exist every where, that in all nations, and in every community, laws to restrain sin are found to be necessary? What mean all these courts of justice, these legal officers, and jails, and penitentiaries, which every where meet our eyes? Why the expiatory feature which we find in the rituals of every form of religion invented by man? Read the literature, and hear the conversations, of every people. If each man does not confess sin in himself, he fails not to ascribe it to others. Why these apprehensions in all minds, concerning the future? They could not originate except in a consciousness of guilt. Are not the pleasures of men deeply marked by sin? And who will declare even to his best friend, every action of his life, and thought of his own heart? Scarcely is there an object, an action, or an emotion, but has a tongue proclaiming perpetually, and vehemently, the sinfulness of mankind.

Admit that all men are sinners, and what then? If all are sinners, how I would ask, are we to account for it? How can we explain this deep revolt of our *entire race*, from God, and holiness? A revolt which has extended to *all*; not one individual being found to furnish an exception Plainly there is in all hearts—this is the least that can be said—a strong *tendency* to sin, evident *corruption*, palpable *depravity*. But what is depravity? It is, I answer, a corrupt vitiated state of the heart, which is destructive of moral principle, or if you please, of true holiness. It is evinced in the violation of truth, and the omission of duty; in the triumph of the animal appetites over the intellectual powers; in the dominion of selfishness over our motives and pursuits; and in the perversion of the understanding, the will, and the affections. Such is

depravity, of which our own observations prove to us that all men are partakers. And now, whence did it *originate?* How did it gain *universal* possession? It must necessarily have its cause, and that cause must be adequate to produce the effect. We turn to the word of God, and our inquiries are answered. "By one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."* "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners."† The depravity, and sinfulness of our race, therefore, originated in the fall of our first parents, and from them, have these evils been inherited by us all.

Do you find arising in your mind, any reluctance to admit this conclusion? Remember that it is a *fact* simply, after which we are now inquiring. Nor must this fact be embarrassed by uniting with it foreign considerations. If it be true that the depravity, and sinfulness of mankind, exist in consequence of the apostacy of Adam, this truth cannot be effected by any inexplicableness in regard to the medium through which the transmission has been made, nor by any opinions we may form of the propriety, or impropriety of the dispensation. These topics may be the foundation of other inquiries; and they may lead to endless difficulties, and perplexities; but they cannot for a moment, turn us aside from our decision. And you will permit here—it seems to me an appropriate place—a word of explanation. When it is assumed that, in consequence of the fall of our first parents, all men are sinners, it is not intended to be intimated, that their posterity are guilty of their sin. Moral acts are not transferable from one person to another. The individual action of any agent is, in its very nature, the action of that agent only. It is therefore incapable of being participated in by any other. The *guilt* of such a personal act must consequently, be equally incapable of being participated in, or

* Rom. v. 12. † Rom. v. 19.

transferred. To the actor alone can the guilt of the action attach. None of his posterity therefore, are guilty of the sin of Adam. And further. It is not maintained, nor admitted, that any of the children of Adam are, or ever will be, punished for the sin of Adam. "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father." "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."* We are not guilty of Adam's sin; we are not liable to be punished for his sin; but we are ourselves *personally* sinners; and the influence which has prompted us, is the depravity, the corruption of our moral nature, which has come to us through our relation to the original progenitors of mankind.

We have inherited depravity from our first parents. Such we have seen, and reason approves it, is the declaration of God in his most holy word. In no other way can we rationally account for its universal existence. The influence of evil example is inadequate to corrupt every individual of our species. What cause less potent than a strongly depraved bias of man's moral nature, could produce this result? But besides this, depravity develops itself in children as soon as they are capable of moral action. Infants also die. But infants, since they have never voluntarily sinned, could not die were they not depraved. Uniform sin proves uniform tendency to sin, and what is this tendency but depravity? This state of the heart could not, it is most evident, have been *accidental*, since it marks the character of all men, of every period, and of every nation. Its source plainly, must be the fountain head of all the race. The cause which produced universal depravity must be one and the same, since the effects are invariably, one and the same. Nothing can be a cause of which the effect cannot be predicted. In searching for the cause, we must necessarily be guided by the effect. Before the fall our first parents were not depraved, but pure and

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* Ezek. xviii. 20.

holy. Immediately after the fall depravity was developed. They were then corrupt and sinful, and in these respects their likeness has been borne by all their posterity. Whence, therefore, but from them, could it have come down to us? It is incontrovertibly certain that the depravity, and consequent sinfulness of our race, originated in the apostacy of our first parents, and from them it has been inherited by all their descendants.

The nature and source of human depravity are now determined. We proceed to another inquiry. To what extent has it affected the disposition of man?

It affects, I answer, our whole moral being. It is *total.* But how can this be? Is every individual of our species as wicked as it is possible for him to be? I beg to be understood. The phrase, "total depravity," does not, as some have imagined, mean that every man is wicked to the utmost practicable extent, but simply, that all his moral powers are corrupt. Much yet remains that is not only innocent, but truly admirable. Natural affection, parental love, filial devotion, social integrity, compassion, friendship, patriotism; these, and other like characteristics, are noble in themselves, and honorable to human nature. They subsist however, in conjunction with deep moral obliquity, and may even flourish in the soul that is entirely destitute of holiness. Depravity, though it has pervaded the whole mind, may yet become more deep. "Evil men and seducers, shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived."* In a glass of water containing a grain of arsenic, every particle of the fluid is poisoned. It is totally poisoned. Yet if a second grain be added, the water is twice as poisonous as before. Thus the sinfulness of wicked men becomes more and more intense. "The human heart is by nature utterly destitute of love to God, or love to man as the creature of God, and consequently is destitute of true virtue."†

* 2 Tim. iii. 13. † Andrew Fuller.

Another feature of this subject now presents itself. We are all depraved. Our depravity is total. But since this condition of things has been entailed upon us without our own fault, or procurement, and our actual transgression is a never-failing result, is it exactly just, that we should be held to a severe accountability? Indeed, may we not of right, plead this very depravity as an apology for our sins? Let this inquiry be deliberately weighed. God requires of you nothing but love. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind,"* and he who does this will "love his neighbor as himself." Is not this perfectly reasonable? Is not God infinitely lovely? As your Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor, is he not worthy to command your affections, and your service? Ought you not to love him, and to evince your love in a suitable manner? But you refuse to love, or to honor him. Is your disinclination to do what you ought (this disinclination, remember, is your depravity) any just apology for your refusal? Your *depravity* therefore, is no excuse for your sin. And your *transgressions* are not your misfortune, they are your fault. Whatever may be said of the causes of your becoming a sinner, and however strongly you may desire to acquit yourself on such grounds, your own conscience bears testimony that you are a sinner, not reluctantly, nor by constraint, but because you preferred to be a sinner. You have deliberately chosen to transgress God's holy and just law. Speculate as you please upon depravity, and persuade yourself if you can, that since it is hereditary, to be a sinner is your fate, for which you are more to be pitied than blamed, but in your heart, you are at the same moment, conscious that your reasoning is not true. You still feel guilty on account of sin, and cannot avoid the secret conviction that you are deceiving yourself.

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* Matt. xxii. 37.

You can readily test the argument. For this purpose apply the principles that govern your conduct towards your fellow-men, to your own case, as it stands before God. When an individual commits frequent, and aggravated offences against *you*, do you *acquit* him on the ground that he is *corrupt*, and that therefore, the injuries that he inflicts upon you, are *not his fault*, but his *misfortune?* So you profess to think, God ought to act towards you! But *you* will not be thus governed. When a man has done you an injury, you ask only to know whether the act was rational, and voluntary. If you are satisfied on these points, you at once pronounce him guilty, and proceed to demand appropriate redress. But in thus acting you must perceive that you condemn yourself, and prove that *you* really regard sin, depravity notwithstanding, not as a misfortune merely, but as a crime. Your sin against God is voluntary, deliberate, uncompelled, and your offences are without apology or palliation. But this is not the worst aspect of the case. Is it not true that you have, in many particulars, desired to be, and but for two things would have been, a much greater transgressor than you actually are? One of these is public opinion, from the odium of which you have shrunk; the other is the laws of your country, the penalty of which has deterred you. Thus your course has been checked, and you have been driven back from many a desired wicked gratification. You are therefore far from being as sinful as you have really desired. And say you that your sin is not voluntary? Claim you to be not criminal?

Thus you see that for sin of any kind, or degree, depravity, dreadful as it is, presents no apology whatever. And how terrible, how deadly, is the guilt thus incurred! Upon this point, I will not now speak. Sin, alas! loads you with chains, and brings upon you a train of curses, that burn, and wither, and destroy you. Such were its effects upon our first parents, such are its effects upon you. The smallest

transgression places you beyond the pale of innocence, and consequently, out of the precincts of salvation. How deep, how fearful is its guilt!

We have thus seen that the apostacy of our first parents is no allegory, no "instructive mythos," but a certain, and most calamitous reality; that their fall was not of necessity, or compelled by divine decree, but voluntary, of their own free choice; and that their defection brought on them depravity, and into the world confusion, and wretchedness. We have further seen that all their descendants, in every age, and country, are sinners, a truth proved by arguments and facts numerous and conclusive; and that since universal sin, proves, universal tendency to sin, which tendency is in fact, depravity, all men are depraved. This depravity we have traced up to our connection with our first parents, and shown that since no other cause is adequate to the result, we received it from them, as the progenitors of our race. We have looked into the nature of depravity, and have found that it consists essentially, in a state of mind, the opposite of that which is required by the law of God, the sum of which is LOVE. We have seen that our depravity is *total*, affecting all the moral powers of the soul. And we have closed the argument by showing that we are all voluntary, intentional, and deliberate transgressors; and that our depravity affords neither excuse, nor palliation for our sins. Such is your moral position before God. What more need I say? How melancholy, how alarming, the condition of man by nature! How completely ruined and lost! You walk upon the crumbling verge of eternal destruction! "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears," that I might weep perpetually over your accumulated woes! These are the horrible demons, your depravity and sin, that,

> "Weave the winding-sheet of souls, and lay
> Them in the urn of everlasting death."

CHAPTER III.

SALVATION CANNOT BE OBTAINED BY OBEDIENCE TO THE LAW.

Law is prevalent necessarily, every where; the nature of God's law; its universal authority; its strictness; the law secures happiness to the obedient; sinners against the law can never be saved by the law; the reasons of this; the present benefits of the law to sinless beings, to the Christian, to the sinner.

SALVATION cannot be obtained by obedience to the law. This truth I shall now attempt to establish, and make plain, by considerations drawn from the nature of the law, from the sinfulness of men, and from the holiness of God.

The divine law, I must in the outset remind you, necessarily exists throughout the universe. Jehovah governs in all things, and to his power, and rule, there are no limits. You can no more conceive of an existence of any kind, without law for its government, than you can conceive of nonentity itself. The laws of the physical, intellectual, and moral world, known in our schools as Natural Philosophy, and Astronomy, Metaphysics, and Ethics, are all really, and truly, the laws of God, which in his wisdom, he has established for the guidance of those departments of his boundless kingdom. But where, and what, are the laws he has instituted for the government of the spiritual world? Has he given none? To suppose so would be unphilosophical, not to say absurd. He governs in the spiritual world pre-eminently, and in a manner at the same time, perfectly suited to the nature of spiritual intelligences, and conformable to the wisdom and benevolence of his own immaculate character. The laws of the natural world are revealed to us in nature, but those of the spiritual world are revealed to us in the Bible.

When we speak of God's law the minds of those we address are, I apprehend, not always clear. Permit, therefore,

some carefulness of definition. I observe that the term *law*, is used in Scripture, with considerable latitude of meaning. It sometimes expresses the revealed will of God, as communicated in his word; at other times, the Mosaic Institutions as distinguished from the Gospel; frequently it is employed in a more restricted sense, and denotes the ritual observances of the Hebrew religion; and occasionally, the moral code, a summary of which we have in the "ten precepts" of Sinai, written by the finger of God, upon tables of stone, and delivered to his people by Moses. By the law of God I here mean the great Constitution of the divine government, containing all those *primary, anterior*, and *eternal* principles of truth, and justice, existing in the very nature of God himself, which were inscribed upon man's conscience at his creation, and which bind all intelligent beings to the throne of Jehovah. This is the light in which I desire you now to consider the subject. Here we have the sum of all spiritual government. That this law is connate with man, and that its principles are recognized by him, appears from its traces, which like the ruins of some magnificent temple, are still discernible in every mind. From this source even the heathen themselves have a glimmering of light, so that Paul could say of them;—"These, having not the [written] law, are a law unto themselves, who shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another."* Here we take our stand, at *the foundation* of all the relations between divinity, and humanity, and between man, and his fellow-man.

But you desire information still more particular. What is this great *Constitution* of the government of God? It is, I answer, as has been before stated, substantially, LOVE. The manner, and forms, by which since the fall especially,

* Rom. ii. 14, 15.

expressions of this great principle are to be made by us towards God, and towards men, and its developments in the various relations and details of life, embrace many commands, admonitions, and precepts, both moral and positive, regarding piety to God, and justice, and judgment among men. But all these, numerous as they are in the word of revelation, and large as is the space they occupy, are but so many rays verging from the bright centre of LOVE. Our Lord Jesus Christ himself so instructs us. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the *first* and *great* commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang *all the law* and the prophets."* Do not I entreat you, misconceive the nature of the law of God, nor its claims to your entire, and hearty obedience. It is necessarily, an exact reflection of the moral perfections of its great Author. "God is Love."† All the claims of the law are in effect, met and satisfied by love. "Love is the fulfilling of the law."‡ It is the great motive power in all the details of Christian life, and duty, as set forth in the word of truth, where we have special instructions regarding the relations we bear, and the duties we owe to Jehovah as our Creator, the Father of our spirits, and the giver of every good and every perfect gift, and to our fellow man, as the creature of God, and our brother. A perfect conformity to the law of God would therefore, of necessity, be an entire imitation, both in the disposition of our mind, and the conduct of our life, of the character of God. God is love, his law is love, and the sum of all true religion in every age, and under every dispensation, is love. Its forms in different ages, have been different, but its substance is invariably the same. Thus briefly, I have described the law of God, which I trust, you will clearly comprehend and correctly appreciate.

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* Matt. xxii. 37–40. † 1 John iv. 16. ‡ Rom. xiii. 10.

The law, I am now prepared to remark, claims, as is shown both by revelation, and by the character of the law itself, universal authority. This is another trait in its nature, of great importance to be understood. Jehovah is God over all. The moment *matter* exists, it comes under the power of the laws of matter; and the moment a *spiritual nature* enters into life, it comes under the law that governs the spiritual world. Nor can any such nature exist, human or angelic, in time or in eternity, in innocence or in guilt, to whom the law does not extend, and whose full obedience it does not demand. Angels as well as men, are governed by law. This is evident from the fact that angels have transgressed. "God spared not," says an Apostle, "the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment."* But "where no law is, there is no transgression."† Therefore laws exist for the government of angels, of holy angels in heaven, and to which they are all subject. Even the infinite God himself, it may be truly and reverently said, is guided by fixed laws. These are developed in his nature, made known in his holy word, and in accordance with which he directs all his acts. Upon these laws are predicated, as we all know, both the threatenings, and the promises of divine revelation. To their requisitions it is the glory, and joy, of all holy beings to conform.

But men are now depraved, and sinners. So are some of the angels. Are we still under the same obligation to obey the law fully, as before? I answer, we most assuredly are. Why are we not? Our corruption, and transgressions, have not annulled our obligations, nor even weakened them in the smallest degree. Whatever disabilities we may have incurred in consequence of our becoming offenders, it is impossible that our obligations can be at all diminished on that

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* 2 Peter ii. 4. † Rom. iv. 15.

account, either in this world, or in the next. Transgressors against the laws of our country, are not for that reason, absolved from future obedience. Nor when men become remarkably depraved, are they considered as no longer amenable to justice. A drunkard may have lost much of his ability to keep sober. Is it therefore no sin for him to be drunken? No such principle obtains in human government, nor does it in the government of God. What! A sinner, because he is a sinner, not obliged fully to obey the law! If so, then it follows that a man may sin until the law has no further claims against him. By sinning he can free himself from sin, having destroyed his obligation to law, and his liability to the sentence of divine justice! No one will defend so monstrous an absurdity. It is plain that your becoming a sinner does not remit any part of your duty to God, or to men.

When however, a sinner dies, and goes to destruction, is he still under obligation to obey the law? Yes, surely. Why is he not? When once a man is punished for his crimes, (and this simply is the condition of lost sinners, their punishment is come,) is the power of the law broken? Among men, when one has been punished, is he no longer under obligation to regard the authority for the violation of which he suffers? When a man has committed a robbery, and is in the process of punishment for it, may he then rob and plunder with impunity? No one so believes. Yet he certainly may, if the principle be true that punishment absolves the transgressor from his obligation to obey the law. Is it a fact that when the sinner dies, and goes to perdition, he ceases longer to be subject to the law? Surely not. Is not the place of eternal punishment within the dominions of God? Is it not most evident that God punishes incorrigible offenders for sins committed *there*, as well as for those committed *here*? But how can he justly do so, unless in that horrible region his laws are in full force? God's authority

is as absolute in hell, as it is on earth, or in heaven. Every moment a sinner on earth, or a lost spirit, or a devil in hell, does not love the Lord God with all his heart, and soul, and mind, he is committing sin, and augmenting his criminality. Neither therefore can the sinfulness, and consequent disability, of a sinner yet among the living, nor the punishment of a lost spirit human or angelic, relieve the one, or the other, from crime, and from responsibility. The law continues to be supreme over all created beings.

The law of God, let it be remembered, did not begin with the creation of man. It governed angels anterior to this period. Neither will it end with this world. There are commandments, and ordinances, growing out of it, designed only for the present life, for the period of trial, and for peculiar temporal circumstances, but the great principles are eternal. It is therefore, certain, that when we become corrupt in heart, and offenders in conduct, although thereby laid under the penal curse, our obligations to obey are in no measure diminished. And since that law extends to all intelligent beings, under all circumstances, and forever, it is alike obligatory upon all in heaven, upon earth, and in perdition.

The strictness of the law is another characteristic which demands our attention.

We have seen that its substance is Love, for the expression of which, under different circumstances in the present world, various commandments, statutes, precepts, and ordinances, occupying a very large space in the Bible, are instituted Compliance with the forms thus enjoined is requisite. But this of itself (in the letter merely) is not obedience. The state of the heart—of the affections, inclinations, desires, purposes—is of primary consideration. The intention, is regarded by Jehovah, as virtually, the act.* The law claims

* Matt. v. 27, 28.

to govern not the conduct merely, but the powers also of the inner man. "God is a spirit; and they that worship him [acceptably] must worship him [not in form only, but] in spirit and in truth."* The whole heart must be in perfect submission, uninterrupted by a single insurgent feeling. It demands a purity of character uncontaminated by a single spot; a zeal, and devotion, unrelaxing in a single purpose. All this it claims unceasingly, of every intelligent being in the whole boundless creation. It imposes the same obligations upon the tallest archangel before the throne on high, and upon the obscurest human being that inhabits the footstool of Jehovah, upon living sinners on earth, and lost sinners in perdition. All, angels and men and devils, are under infinite obligations to yield forever, a pure spiritual obedience to the law. The moment one fails, he is, as to any restoration by obedience, lost irrecoverably. Such is the strictness of the law of God.

It is also, to be farther remarked, that the law is designed, and in its nature fitted, to give, and it does give, uninterrupted happiness to all by whom it is obeyed. Does it govern all beings in heaven? To their nature it is perfectly adapted. They are conformed to its requirements. All its claims they meet, and fully satisfy, by love, fervent love to God, and to all their heavenly associates. The celestial regions are pervaded with the unbroken harmony of love. And how perfectly happy! O who can estimate the joy, deep, calm, entire, that fills the angelic mind! The same love was written originally on man's heart. Thus endowed, they went forth amid the bowers of their own blest paradise. Behold our first parents there. Delights cluster perpetually, about their way. Joy sparkles in every fountain, and blooms in every fragrant flower, and reclines with them, upon every green couch where they repose. Who

* John iv. 24.

can adequately conceive of half their bliss? And whence all this pure unmingled happiness? It arose, and wherever it exists, still arises, from a full conformity to the law of God. "The man," or the angel, "that doeth these things, shall live by them."* He is happy. Happiness embraces every ultimate good. Perfect happiness, is perfect good. God intended man, and all his creatures, to be happy. To this end, his government was constituted, and his law established. Thus also his own glory was to be manifested. And in all the obedient it is, and ever must be, fully accomplished. Were perfect obedience universal in our world, all our woes would fly before it, like the shadows of night before the rising sun. Heaven would be in our midst. It would

> "——— Renew again
> On earth lost Eden's faded bloom, and fling
> Hope's halcyon halo o'er the waste of life."

No interruption of happiness has ever taken place, or ever can take place, but in consequence of a violation of the law of God.

Such is the nature of the law of God. We have seen that it necessarily exists every where; that its properties harmonize with the attributes of God, it is holy, just and good; that its substance is Love, love to God and love to man; that it is binding upon all intelligent beings, every where, and binding forever; that it is characterized by the same strictness that marks the holiness of its great Author; and that it is designed and fitted to bring, and does bring, to all the obedient, pure happiness. Why then is the law of God so fearful to us? Why do we not contemplate it, as holy angels do, with joy and delight? The answer is plain. Because we, alas! have all become sinners. The blessings of the law have therefore to us, necessarily ceased. We have turned them aside by our transgressions, and only its commands, and its curses remain. These alarm our fears, sear our hearts,

* Rom. x. 5.

dry up our joys, and cover us with miseries. "For as many as are of the works of the Law, are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them."* Whither are we, wretched offenders, to look? To the law still? It offers no remedy to the guilty. It shows no way of escape, or salvation. Between the blessings of obedience, and the curses of disobedience, there is no middle ground. To be saved by the Law is now impossible. The declaration of heaven is daily sounding in our ears the death knell of all our hopes. "The soul that sinneth it shall die."† This is the condition of all offenders. And yet without any just knowledge of the law, many dark and ignorant minds are dreaming of d[illegible] peace by some occasional acts of virtue, as they misname them, some anticipated amendment of life. But every one who rightly apprehends the subject, feels the force of the apostle's declaration:—"I was [as I supposed] alive without the law once, but when the commandment came [when I understood it] sin revived [I saw and felt my desperate condition] and I died, [saw my exposure to perdition.] And the commandment which was ordained to life, [would have secured it to the obedient] I found to be unto death, [because I had transgressed it.] For sin taking occasion by the commandment deceived me, and by it slew me."‡ Alas! sin has deceived, and slain us *all!* A result this, arising not from any vindictiveness on the part of God, as if his anger was like that of man, but from the very nature of things, inevitable. If a man put himself in opposition to the laws of matter, gravitation for instance, he will be crushed by its force. If he habitually infringe the laws of physical health, he will certainly destroy his life. And so, if he constantly violate the laws of his spiritual being, he *must* overwhelm his soul in death.

I now remark that sinners against the law of God, never

* Gal. iii. 10. † Ezek. xviii. 4. ‡ Rom. vii. 9–11.

can be saved by that law, because, in the first place, justice never can pronounce them innocent.

It is inherent in the very nature of justice, that when once a man is an offender, he can never afterwards be declared innocent of crime. A man, for instance, commits murder. He may have been pure up to that hour; he may be pure ever after; and he may repent, and weep perpetually, over the act; but he is a murderer. He may escape punishment; he may be respected and even honored by his fellow-men; but he is still a murderer; and if ever judged justly by the laws of his country, he will be, he must be, pronounced guilty. Such is justice in human law. And are the laws of God less just? You have sinned against them, ten thousand times. You may repent, but this does not alter the fact. You may cease longer to sin, and try to do good, but all your former sins remain. Your good actions do not obliterate your past sins. They continue to be sins. They do not expiate your former criminality. God will judge you justly, according to the law; and you must be pronounced guilty! You are guilty. And unless some other remedy than the law provides, can be found, you will remain guilty forever. And then how deep, how fearful is your guilt! The turpitude of violating any particular law, is graduated by several considerations. Among these, we notice the authority from which the law springs, the blessings which its observance confers, and the magnitude of the interests it was intended to protect. Let your conduct be estimated by these data. God your Creator and Preserver, has authority to establish laws for your government. He has established them, and they are consistent with his own holiness, justice, and benevolence. Dare you disregard them? The happiness which the observance of his laws confers, has just been stated, and need not be further illustrated. And what were the interests they were designed to protect? I answer, the holiness, and the spiritual life, as well

as the happiness of man. By your offences you dishonor God, annihilate your own purity, bring wretchedness into the world, destroy your spiritual life, and overwhelm yourself in death, temporal, and eternal. And then, how disastrous the influence you exert on others! Is sin therefore a small evil? O it is deep, and dark, and damning. Law, and justice, must so pronounce it. Can the law which you have so shamefully violated, and continue to violate, remain untarnished, and yet save you? No, never, never.

But, secondly, perhaps the law makes some provision for pardon. If so, where is that provision to be found? Can it be pointed out? No such provision exists in the law. If no other prospect presents itself to you than this, your condition is utterly hopeless. Sinners therefore, never can be saved by the law, because it makes no provision for their pardon.

Moreover, salvation on this ground is impossible for a third reason. God's law is a faithful reflection of his own holy character. It is impossible for him to disregard its claims, without denying himself. He must enforce its demands, or cease to be holy, and just, and therefore cease to be God! But "he cannot deny himself."* God is immutable. He cannot change. His law therefore, cannot change. What hope does it offer then, to any offender?

A fourth reason. Sinners cannot be saved by the law, because they are depraved, and the law provides no method by which depravity can be removed. You have by nature, no love to God, and the law cannot give you love to God. Your depravity must be removed, and this can be done only by the power of the Spirit. What then can a violated law do for you? It cannot change your heart. It cannot save you.

It is, fifthly, indubitably certain, that sinners cannot be saved by the law, from the fact, that God himself has, in his infinite love, and mercy, instituted another medium of salva-

* 2 Tim. ii. 13.

tion, *the Gospel* of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. If salvation by the law had been possible, would he not have chosen that method in preference to the sufferings of Christ? So the word of inspiration declares. "If there had been a law given, that could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law."* "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."† "But now the righteousness of God without the law, is manifested, being witnessed by the law, and the prophets, even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all them that believe."‡ "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."§ In truth, the Gospel only, has power to bring us into the state of mind required by the law, and which is essential to salvation. Hence the declaration, "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, [incompetent to save sinful men] God [did,] sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."‖ God therefore repeatedly declares that sinners cannot be saved by the law, and to carry out his designs of grace for our deliverance, has instituted another medium, the Gospel of his Son.

These facts and arguments place, as I believe, the truth of the proposition, that *the salvation of sinners cannot be obtained by obedience to the law*, beyond the reach of successful controversy. It is impossible, because justice never can

* Gal. iii. 21.
† Gal. ii. 21.
‡ Rom. iii. 21, 22.
§ Titus iii. 5–7.
‖ Rom. viii. 3, 4.

pronounce sinners innocent; because the law makes no provision for their pardon; because it is a reflection of God's holy character, and he cannot disregard its claims without denying himself; because the law has no power to remedy the depravity of our hearts; and because God having declared that we cannot be saved by the law, has instituted other means for our deliverance.

One other inquiry on this subject remains to be considered. What is the present advantage of the law to men, and to angels? To the angels, I remark, who have retained their primitive holiness, it gives—since they fully obey it—boundless joy. It does so to the spirits of the just made perfect. To the Christian upon earth, although not a covenant of salvation, it remains in full force as a rule of life, or standard of duty. Upon this point, many sincere minds have fallen into melancholy mistakes. We will detain you for a moment while we examine it. It might be sufficient to ask but a single question. Is the great law of love not obligatory on the Christian? But descend to particulars. Let every divine command be considered separately, and tell me which, in the decalogue, or in the whole moral code, the believer is not bound to observe. Is it not true—it has I think, been fully proved—that the law grows necessarily out of the relations that subsist between God and his creatures? Is it not always authoritative wherever these relations are found? Or are our relations to God, and our obligations to him, dissolved when we cease to be rebels, and become reconciled to him? Would not the child who had rebelled against parental authority, still be after reconciliation, and pardon, under the same obligation as formerly, to love and to obey his father? And what, let me ask, are the teachings of Christ and his apostles on the subject before us? "I came not," says Messiah, "to destroy the law, but to fulfil."*

* Matt. v. 17.

And Paul thus speaks:—"Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid. Yea we establish the law."* Is it not true that love to God, and to our fellow-men as the creatures of God, is enforced in the *Gospel* for the very reason that it is enjoined in the law? "Brethren," says an apostle, "ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh: but by love serve one another. For *all the law* is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."†

The law of God is therefore still binding upon Christians. Is it objected that the Gospel is now the only law recognized as in force? But is not this objection in fact, yielding the point; since the Gospel has really incorporated into itself the grand principles of the law, and by them it is pervaded and imbued? Moreover the precepts of the law, are in the Gospel, expressly inculcated, and enforced by new considerations. God has there provided that it shall be written in the heart of every believer. The result is, that he delights in the law of God, and seeks conformity to its commands. The believer is certainly "dead to the law" as a covenant of salvation. He has no expectation of being justified on the ground of obedience to the law; but he is alive to the law, as involving the great essential element of all true spiritual religion. The supremacy of the law is thus maintained. By the Gospel its divine precepts are more fully established, and more strongly enforced, than by the lightnings, and tempest, the sound of the trumpet, and the voice of words, which attended its first promulgation from Sinai's flaming summit.

The law of God serves also, in reference to the sinner, a most valuable end. "By the law is the knowledge of sin."‡ Our sin is most appalling. But it is still more fearful, if we are ignorant of its turpitude, and extent. How many are there whose minds are in almost total darkness on this vital

* Rom. iii. 31. † Gal. v. 13, 14. ‡ Rom. iii. 20.

subject, and who, although overwhelmed with crime, seem to be unconscious of their danger! They gayly, and thoughtlessly, pass on,

> "As goes the ox to slaughter; as the fool
> To the correction of the stocks; or bird
> That hastes into the fowler's subtle snare,
> And knows not, silly thing, 'tis for its life."

A result of unspeakable consequence, indeed of absolute necessity, is gained, when the sinner is deeply convinced of his guilt, and danger. But how can this be without a correct knowledge of the law, both as respects the precept, and its penalty? How can we understand the character of our own heart and life, and the fearfulness of our condemnation? How can we justly estimate the grace and mercy of the Gospel, through which alone we obtain deliverance, without such knowledge? It is by the light which the law imparts, that you discover the fearfulness of your prospects. By it you see that all your future is clothed in terror. Your danger fills you with dismay, and you cry out with deep anguish, "What shall I do?" What *can* I do to be saved? You are condemned, and helpless, and miserable. Nor until you are fully impressed with this fact, and its awfulness, and are desirous of being delivered, will you ever feel so deeply the need of a Saviour, as to renounce your own imagined righteousness, and present yourself for mercy, humbly and penitently, at the feet of Jesus Christ.

O that I could so illustrate, the lost condition of the sinner, under the law, as to impress you with its awfulness. See you that man who, for some capital offence against his country, is condemned, incarcerated, and reserved by justice, for the punishment of his crimes? The miserable wretch looks out through the gratings of his dungeon, upon the beautiful world around, now lost to him. He beholds the gay and happy throngs in the full enjoyment of liberty, and light, and soft breezes, and social blessings. His bosom heaves with desire to be of their number. But is he so

infatuated as to expect such a boon? No: the memory of his degradation comes up, and the recollection overwhelms him that the joyous company he desires to join, are innocent of his crimes, and deserve not his fate. His heart is crushed with the horrible reality, that he cannot escape, but must be carried from that noisome cell, to an ignominious death, and his name go down to obloquy and darkness. There he sits an embodiment of desperate woe. And for all this, who is in fault? Is the law unjust? Are its administrators partial? Far from it. He has no one to blame but himself. He wilfully transgressed. He knew the penalty. He must inevitably suffer. Such is your condition as an offender against God. You are condemned for your sins, and reserved in the prison-house of wrath, to the punishment which divine justice is compelled to inflict. You may, when finally lost, long to possess the blessedness of the throngs that cluster beneath the tall spreading branches of the tree of life; but from these joys you are forever separated. They are reserved for the holy. You, alas! must go from your dark wretchedness, to a still more terrible doom! Is God in fault? Is his law to blame? No such thought is reasonable. No one is to blame but yourself. God is holy, and merciful; and his law is holy, and just, and good. You alone are guilty. Such is the deliberate decision of your conscience now; such will be its decision at the last day; and such will be its decision forever. Yes! Conscience is to-day repeating, and will be eternally repeating in your ears, the cry, the horrible cry, guilty! *guilty!* GUILTY! And if ever, in those regions of hopeless death, the thought of self-justification shall spring up for a moment in your mind, it will be instantly blasted by God Almighty's thunders from above:—

> "Which through the caverns of perdition
> Forlornly echoing, fall on every ear."—
> "Ye knew your duty, but ye did it not."

CHAPTER IV.

THE SALVATION OF SINNERS IS ALONE BY JESUS CHRIST.

God's love to man led him to devise the way of salvation; our redemption is solely of his grace; it is executed by Jesus Christ, who is the true Messiah; the everlasting God; whose satisfaction for our sins is perfect; who is the great Mediator between God and man; and our glorious Intercessor in heaven; in him redemption is complete.

THE condition of man by nature, and under the law of God, is now, I trust, distinctly, and vividly before your mind. Depravity of heart, of which all are partakers, is while it remains, a total disqualification for heaven, and sin against the law, which we have all committed, renders salvation by obedience to the law impossible. Thus are we cut off from life, and hope. Whither shall we look for deliverance? To what resource may we fly? There is, thanks to our Heavenly Father, a remedy. It is provided by the infinite grace of God, and presented to us in the Gospel of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, "in whom we have redemption, through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."* "*The riches of his grace!*" This is the principle upon which our salvation proceeds. It is *grace*, the free unmerited *favor* of Jehovah. The medium of its introduction is the infinite satisfaction made to divine justice by the Son of God. Sentence of death was pronounced upon our first parents, and through them upon us all. But by the intervention of Messiah, its execution was suspended, until a new offer of life should be made, under a better covenant. Thus a second probationary trial was granted. This boon was extended in consequence of the engagement of our

* Eph. i. 7.

Lord and Saviour, to make in due time, on behalf of men, and in human nature, full satisfaction to all the claims of divine justice. Thus the sword of God's wrath was stayed; our race, which otherwise would have been cut off from the earth, was perpetuated; and an opportunity offered for restoration, through Christ the second Adam, to all, and more than all, that in the first Adam we had lost!

The motive which influenced Jehovah to this great work was Love. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."* This love, which, as we have seen in former chapters, constitutes his own nature, and forms the substance of his law, is still the leading impulse. It is this which moves his bosom in our favor. Our condition as sinners was most fearful. It was well calculated to call forth his pity. Our miseries were terrible, and doubtless elicited his compassion. We were also confessedly helpless. We were wholly unable to save ourselves. But his grace was not extended on these merely, or on any similar accounts. He devised for us the way of salvation, because he loved us. And the intensity of that love is evinced by the gift of his Son, his only, his beloved Son, to die for our redemption! No act of Jehovah could have been so *honorable to us* as this. Love is always honorable to the person loved, and in proportion to the purity, intelligence, worth, and disinterestedness of the lover. And it is *God* who loves *us*. Nor could any other consideration present to our minds motives for his service so pure, so full of power, so exalted. Had he saved us from considerations of *pity* for our danger, *compassion* for our miseries, to extend the aid our *impotence* seemed to demand, or because we were not entirely unworthy; our reasons for gratitude would even then, have been boundless. How much more deep should

* John iii. 16.

be our thankfulness, and strong our reasons to rejoice, and to glorify him, when he honors us with the declaration that our redemption arises from still more elevated influences. It is the effect of *his everlasting love!*

Nor does this stupendous scheme of mercy, so strangely originated, remain a mere theory. The glorious work involved in the divine purpose, has been fully executed by Jesus Christ the Son. "By his death we are reconciled to God;"* and he has given his word to enlighten us; his Holy Spirit to sanctify us; and all the means of grace necessary to guide us safely to heaven. This is enough. No more is requisite. The foundation upon which we stand is glorious, deep, broad, eternal. But the Gospel fixes our eyes intently upon our Redeemer! Who and what is he? He is the promised Messiah; the eternal God; in his life, and in his death, he made in our behalf, a perfect satisfaction to infinite justice; he is the great Mediator between God and man; our glorious Intercessor in heaven. Let us consider his claims in these several respects, separately.

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* Rom. v. 10.

SECTION I.

JESUS OF NAZARETH IS THE PROMISED MESSIAH.

Early promise of the Messiah; delay of his coming not prejudicial to human interests; the means by which the knowledge of him was preserved among men; the time of his coming; Jesus of Nazareth is the true Messiah, as shown by the occurrence of those events predicted to transpire at the coming of Messiah, by the place of his birth, by the family from which he sprung, by his appearing in the second temple, by the works which he did, by the testimony of God the Father, of angels, and of all nature, and by the fulfilment in him of all the prophecies relating to the life, the works, the betrayal, the sufferings, the death, the burial, the resurrection and ascension of Messiah.

A Deliverer, who should redeem the world from sin, was the *first*, and the *great promise* of God to man. Its annunciation, full of surprising forbearance and mercy, was made immediately after the fall, and while our first parents, though covered with the shame of their apostacy, yet lingered in the bowers of Eden. Man's circumstances did not then permit, nor did it comport with the pleasure of the Most High, that the Saviour should at once execute the work assigned him by infinite goodness. His advent was deferred until "the fulness of the time" had come. Four thousand years were destined to measure their weary circles, ere he should appear upon earth. The grace and wisdom of the divine arrangement, were however, such that the delay inflicted no injury on any human interests. God was pleased to make the *anticipated* satisfaction of Messiah, as effective from the very beginning of time, for the pardon of sin, as if it had already been offered. His great sacrifice had not yet been made, but its merits were not on that account the less available. Abel, and Noah, and Moses, were as really, and truly saved by the virtue of his sufferings, received by faith, as were Paul, and Peter, and John. The *promise* of the Messiah, which constituted the life and power of the *old* dispensation, as its fulfilment now does of the *new*, was repeated in various divine communications to the patriarchs.

Abraham was assured that the coming Saviour should spring from his family.* To Isaac, to Jacob, and to David, it was successively renewed, and reaffirmed. Fathers, prophets, saints, all who were instructed in the "Oracles of God," found here, ample ground to sustain their faith, and fully to confirm their hopes of salvation.

But were there not reasons to apprehend that man, in his corruptions, blinded by sin, and subject to be entangled, and led astray by the snares which the great adversary would attempt to weave around him, might, in the long period to transpire, lose sight of the blessings thus held out before him? Jehovah, to prevent a result so calamitous, immediately upon the annunciation of the promise, instituted sacrifices, to be observed in his worship, and which were minutely descriptive of the character, and work of Messiah. That these sacrifices, having as they did their origin at the fountain of our race, passed into every country, and were in some sort, observed by all nations, and communities, until the coming of Christ, and that in dark portions of the earth yet unpenetrated by the Gospel, they still prevail, are facts too well known to require any extended remarks. By these offerings, the knowledge of the Redeemer was designed to be kept perpetually before the mind of the world. Idolatry soon, in many places, perverted them to other purposes; carnality associated them with corruptions, and abominable vices; a pall was thrown over their meaning, and thus was dissipated, and to a great extent destroyed, the intelligence they were instituted to convey. But God did not allow his purposes to fail. They were reappointed, in the wilderness, incorporated into the ceremonial observances enjoined upon the family of Israel and were made to constitute the most striking feature in the Levitical law.

Not only did the sacrifices, in which was daily exhibited

* Gen. xxii. 18.

the great idea of the innocent dying for the guilty, prefigure and foreshow the coming Messiah—the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world,—but in addition to this, the Hebrew prophets, inspired from on high to proclaim and record the word of Jehovah, dwelt upon the characteristics of the promised Deliverer with especial particularity. These were of old, the sources of knowledge. To those who had access to them, they were always rich, ample, and varied.

I would not, in passing, omit to place before you another important consideration. In some minds, I lament to observe, the idea seems to prevail, that nearly all that relates to Messiah is Jewish. They speak of him as the Messiah *of the Jews;* and appear to think that when others claim to be interested in his atonement, they are almost encroaching upon Hebrew rights. I desire you to keep distinctly in mind the fact, that he is the Saviour of all nations, no less than of Israel. The promise of Messiah was made to no one people exclusively, but to the Fathers of the whole world, and therefore belonged to all—to the Arabians, Egyptians, Persians, Syrians, Greeks, Romans, to every other nation, and people, in every age—as legitimately, and as fully, as to the descendants of Abraham. The first typical sacrifices ordained to represent him, were instituted for all people; and the express stipulation of the promise is, that in him "shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." What advantage then in this particular, had the Jews above other people? Especially these only, that the Messiah was to arise of their nation, and that therefore, to them, and to their kindred tribes, were entrusted the forms of priestly worship, and the sacred custody of the word of God. But the promise itself, and all the blessings contemplated in it, have equal reference to all people; and to *you* as fully, and as perfectly, as to Abraham, to Moses, or to David.

Having thus seen that the gift of Messiah was the great promise of God in each dispensation preceding the Gospel,

that the delay of his coming did no injury to the interests of men, that the knowledge of his character and work was preserved by sacrifices, and by inspired instructions of the holy prophets, and that the blessings contemplated relate alike to all the nations of the earth, I proceed to other inquiries. *Has Messiah come? Can his person be distinctly and certainly identified? Who is the Messiah?* Can these questions be answered? Messiah has come. The time fixed, when he should appear upon earth, and execute the work of redemption, has passed long ago. He is distinctly and certainly identified. Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, our adorable Lord and Saviour. We will now sustain these statements by competent testimony.

The exact time, I remark in the first place, when Messiah should appear upon earth, was definitely fixed, and announced. Tradition generally, but well known and authenticated prophecy especially, turned the eyes of men upon a specific period. The intervening space slowly wore away. The hour came. And now by all nations this great event is momently expected. I say by all nations. Not by the Jews only, but the Greeks, the Romans, by all. So general was the impression that the time was come for the fulfilment of the promise, that the fact was specially noted by contemporary historians, both sacred and profane. Sacred records assure us, that wise men from the East, guided by an extraordinary "star," at this juncture, visited Jerusalem, to learn, not *when*, for that they knew, but, *where* Messiah should be born. And having received the answer, they at once proceeded, and successfully, in search of the new born King. Simeon that holy man, and Anna, and many others of the pious Jews, were waiting in constant expectation to see the Christ. This was "the consolation of Israel" to which they looked. The redemption to be accomplished by him, was the object of their fondest anticipations.*

* Luke ii. 25–38.

Nor is *profane* history silent on this subject. Suetonius, in his Annals of Vespasian, remarks:—"An ancient and settled persuasion prevailed throughout the East, that the Fates had decreed some [man] to proceed from Judea, who should attain universal empire." The words of Tacitus, another Roman writer, are nearly similar. He says:—"Many were persuaded that it was contained in the ancient books of their priests, that *at that time*, the East should prevail, and that some [man] should proceed from Judea, and possess the dominion." To refer to other testimonies is not necessary. Why this breathless expectation, among both Jews, and Gentiles? Why were the eyes of men now turned with deep earnestness to Judea, and the appearance of the great Deliverer expected every hour? "The ancient books of the priests," the revelations of seers, tradition more or less distinct and prevalent, these had cast a light abroad among the people. The last moments of *the time determined*, and well known, were expiring. To these *prophetic* declarations particularly, so familiar to those who are acquainted with the Scriptures, let us now recur One of the most remarkable, and most important, communicated by the ministry of Gabriel, "who stands in the presence of God," is contained in the prophecies of Daniel. "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. Know therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and three score and two weeks: the streets shall be built again and the walls even in troublous times. And after three score and two weeks, shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself; and the people of the prince that shall come, shall destroy the city, and the sanctuary; and the end thereof

shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week, he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease."* Here the time of Messiah's advent is definitely determined. The dates are fixed. Is it possible for any future event to be more precisely predicted? Accompany me now, if you please, carefully, in a brief argument, historical and chronological, on this beautiful prophecy.

To understand it aright, we must ascertain, in the first place, what length of time is embraced in the prophetic "week." This point involves no difficulty. The captivity of the children of Israel, usually called the Babylonish captivity, and during which was delivered this prophecy of the "weeks," commenced, as you will see by reference to Jewish history, in the third year of Jehoiakim, before Christ 607 years. The prophecy before us was communicated to Daniel, "In the first year of Darius, the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes," the same monarch known to Grecian historians as Cyaxares the second, the son of Astyages. The first year of Darius when the prophecy was given, corresponds to the year before Christ 538. Sixty nine of the *seventy years* of the Jewish captivity in Babylon had now consequently elapsed. These *seventy years*, were occupying the mind of the prophet, and it was natural in itself, and accorded well with the genius of the Hebrew language, to speak, in the prophecy of the events about to be disclosed, of seventy sevens, or seventy weeks. These seventy weeks were not ordinary, but jubilee weeks: seven *days* making a *common* week, and seven years a *jubilee* week. In this connection, the form of language adopted, would be easily, and instantly understood. Every one would know that the weeks in question, were not ordinary weeks, but weeks of years,

* Dan. ix. 24–27.

seven years to a week. This passage has always, as far as I know, been so understood, by all classes of Biblical Expositors.

It is, in the next place, necessary for us to know precisely, *at what time these seventy weeks of years commenced.* Otherwise we cannot determine the exact period at which they close, which marks the moment of Messiah's coming.

Upon this point also, there need be no hesitancy. Compare the prophecy we are now considering with the history of Nehemiah's labors in behalf of his suffering countrymen, and you will see conclusively, that the period of the "seventy weeks" commenced with the twentieth year of the reign of Artaxerxes. "In the month Nisan," says Nehemiah, "in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, it pleased the king to send me unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres." For what purpose?—"To restore and to build it." This therefore, is certainly, the time of "the going forth of the commandment to restore, and to build Jerusalem." And Gabriel says to Daniel:—"From the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah, the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and three score and two weeks." It is fully ascertained that Artaxerxes began to reign before Christ 474 years, according to the old computation. Chronology as adjusted, makes the twentieth year of his reign to correspond with the year before Christ 455, coinciding with the 299th year of the city of Rome. Here we have the exact point of time at which the seventy weeks *commenced.*

Let us now make the computation of these weeks, and see to what period they carry us.

"From the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto Messiah, the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and three score and two weeks. And after three score and two weeks, shall Messiah be cut off. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week, and

in the midst of the week, he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease."

The whole period here described is, as you perceive, divided into three portions. The first consists of seven weeks of years, which are equal to forty-nine years; the second is made up of sixty-two weeks of years, amounting to four hundred and thirty-four; which, added to the forty-nine, makes 483 years. Messiah was then to appear, and afterwards to confirm the covenant with many for *one week*. This one week is the third portion, and makes up the whole period of *seventy weeks*. But this one week was to transpire after his coming. He was to appear at the close of the sixty-nine weeks. We have seen that these seventy weeks commenced with the year of Rome 299. Now add to this date the sixty-nine weeks of years, that is 483 years, at which time, Messiah was to appear publicly, and you have the year of Rome 782; precisely, as a glance at chronology will demonstrate, the *fifteenth year of Tiberius Cesar*. The time has now elapsed. Did Messiah appear? Turn, if you please, to the Gospel by Luke,* and you will read thus:—"Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, [Mark the very great particularity of the Evangelist!] the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness, and he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." What now do we behold? "*Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan, unto John to be baptized of him.*" Messiah *came*. He came at the designated time. By the concurring testimony of heaven and earth, the voice of the Father, and the visible descent upon him of God the

* Luke iii. 1–3.

Holy Ghost, he is distinctly and certainly identified. He came *in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.*

But let us pursue the prophecy still further. Why, it may be asked, should it have been divided into three periods? I anwser, Because the *first* period, the seven weeks, ends with the complete restoration of Jerusalem, "when the streets were built again, and the wall, even in troublous times." The *second* period, the sixty-two weeks, ends with the *public* appearing of Messiah. Not his birth. That was not his public appearing. But with his baptism. "Then shall come Messiah the Prince." The *third* and last period, the one week, ends with the full confirming of the covenant of salvation. This last portion is, in the prophecy, divided, as you have already noticed, into two parts. In the midst of it, was the great propitiatory sacrifice to be offered, which was to supersede, and render useless all the sacrifices, and with them the ceremonies, of the Jewish ritual. "And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week; and in the midst of the week, he shall cause the sacrifice, and the oblation to cease." What a period in this world's history was this last jubilee week! The beginning of it saw his baptism. Its central point, three years and a half afterwards, exhibited him upon the cross. It was "in the midst of the week," that "Messiah was cut off, but not for himself." All these events, as history testifies, occurred. After, as well as before, the death of the holy sufferer, his work of confirming the covenant—the New Testament; the Gospel—continued, since it extended through the *whole* week, the *midst* of which was distinguished by his death. That was the period of "signs and wonders;" of the strange gifts of his Holy Spirit; of stupendous miracles; when all might see the power of God. The heavens and the earth, the winds and the waves, and angels and devils, bare wondrous testimony to the truth, and efficacy of the Gospel. Amidst these amazing scenes of divine grace, and mercy, *the one week*

assal; and after including time enough to complete this last portion of the whole, the *seventy weeks* were ended.

Suffer one remark more, regarding several collateral events contained in this great prophecy. It is predicted that the vision and the prophecy shall be sealed up; that the sacrifice and the oblation shall cease; that the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Were these events accomplished? The vision and the prophecy were sealed up; the sacrifice and the oblation ceased, when the Messiah offered himself for sin; the people of the prince—the Romans under Titus—did come against Jerusalem, and did destroy the city and the sanctuary. To the end of the war *desolations* prevailed, and the overspreading of *abominations* made them desolate. This was the abomination of desolation referred to, by our Saviour, as spoken of by Daniel the prophet.*

Thus we have seen the exact time of the coming of Messiah, and demonstrated the great truth that he appeared in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Here I might safely rest the whole argument. But I choose so to fortify and confirm the conclusion, that it shall appear, as it really is, absolutely impregnable.

The Messiah, I observe, secondly, was to be born in Bethlehem. Herod the king, when alarmed by the inquiries of the Eastern sages, to which we have before alluded, in regard to the Christ, who, he feared, would despoil him of his kingdom, "Gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, and demanded of them where Messiah should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea; for thus it is written by the prophet;† And thou Bethlehem in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah; for out of thee shall come a governor, that shall rule my people Israel."‡ In Bethlehem, Jesus

* Matt. xxiv. 15, and Luke xxi. 20. † Micah v. 2. B. C. 750.
‡ Matt. ii. 3–6.

was born. There he was worshipped by angels and by saints. Is he not the Messiah?

Thirdly. All the prophecies, as well as the word of promise itself, determined that Messiah should come of the family of David. Jesus, as is shown by indubitable genealogical records, sprung from that family. And where now is the family of David? Who knows? Who can know? Its genealogy is lost. Not a man, or a woman, now exists upon earth, known to be, or who can ever be proved, a descendant of David? Is not Jesus the Messiah?

Fourthly. Messiah was to appear on earth while the second temple was yet standing. "Behold," says the last of the prophets,* "I [God] will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in; behold he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts." Was this prophecy fulfilled? In whom? Jesus was preceded by John the Baptist, his messenger. He was "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."† In the second temple Jesus taught the multitudes, and healed the blind, and the lame. On this account, inspiration predicted that "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than that of the former."‡ This holy personage was the Lord, Christ, the Messiah; but he was no other than Jesus of Nazareth. Therefore Jesus of Nazareth is the true Messiah. Where, I will ask, is now the second temple? Long since it has been levelled with the dust. The ploughshare of the Roman has passed over all its demolished splendors.

Did not, fifthly, the *character*, and *works* of Jesus, bear unequivocal testimony to his Messiahship? Contemplate his *character*, in all its holiness, its benevolence, its meekness,

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* Malachi iii. 1, 2. B. C. 397 † Mark i. 3. ‡ Haggai ii. 9.

and humility, its consummate perfection, its glorious moral beauty. Is HE not the Messiah? To his *works* he himself appealed. "The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me."* Repeatedly did he thus refer to them. And most conclusive was their testimony. The blind received their sight, the dumb spake, the maimed were made whole, the diseased were healed, and even the dead were brought again into being, and life. The very winds and waves obsequiously obeyed his voice. Was not this the Messiah?

Sixthly. God the Father, in audible declarations from heaven, bore witness to his Messiahship. At the baptism of Jesus, a voice from heaven proclaimed, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." On the mount of transfiguration, the same testimony by the Eternal Father, was repeated. At his birth, in his temptations in the wilderness, at his death, and when he arose from the dead, holy angels avowed him to be the Messiah. "The stars in their courses" pointed him out; the trembling earth, and the sun veiled in darkness; all, all confessed him.

Lastly. The prophecies respecting the betrayal, the death, the burial, the resurrection and ascension of Messiah were all fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. David appears to be actually looking upon the awful scenes which marked the sorrows of Jesus, when, a thousand years before their occurrence, he in describing the sufferings of Messiah, expresses himself thus. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me." "All they that see me laugh me to scorn. They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him, let him deliver him, if he delight in him." "They pierced my hands and my feet." "I may tell all my bones. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture."† "Mine own

* John x. 25, and v. 36. † Psalm xxii. 1, 7, 8, 16, 17, 18.

familiar friend in whom I trusted, who did eat of my bread, hath lift up his heel against me."* Isaiah too thus speaks: —"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities." "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." "And he made his grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death."† Zechariah also, speaking prophetically of the Messiah, says, "And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price, and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price *thirty pieces of silver*. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter, a goodly price that I was prized at of them."‡ Need I detain you to point out the application of all these prophecies regarding the Messiah, to Jesus of Nazareth, and their complete fulfilment in him? Surely not. The whole evangelical history—and with that history I trust you are familiar—does so, and in such a manner as to leave not a lingering doubt in any intelligent mind. And the resurrection of the Messiah from the dead, and his ascension on high, are fixed with equal definiteness and certainty.§ It was not possible that the grave could detain him. "He led captivity captive," and was crowned the glorious conqueror of all the enemies of man. And were these predictions also fulfilled in Jesus?

> "—— And did *he* rise?
> Hear it, ye nations! Hear it, O ye dead!
> He rose! He rose! He burst the bars of death!
> O the burst gates! crushed sting! demolished throne!
> Last gasp of vanquished death! Shout Earth and Heaven!
> This sum of good to man! *Whose nature then*
> Took wing and mounted with him, from the tomb!"

We need not pursue this argument further. We have seen that Jesus of Nazareth is the true Messiah. His claims

* Psalm xli. 9.
† Isai. liii. 3, 5, 7, 9.
‡ Zech. xi. 12, 13.
§ Psalm xvi. 10. Psalm lxviii. 18.

are conclusively demonstrated, by his having come at the precise time fixed by prophecy for the coming of Messiah; by the occurrence of all the collateral events which were predicted to transpire at his appearing; by the place of his birth; by the family from which he sprung; by his teaching in the second temple; by the works which he did; and by the perfect and complete fulfilment in him of all the prophecies regarding the life, the betrayal, the sufferings, the death, the resurrection and ascension of Messiah. God himself vouched his Messiahship, and angels and men bore witness. It is absolutely certain, no moral proposition can be more immovably established, that Jesus of Nazareth is the true Messiah.

SECTION II.

JESUS CHRIST IS THE TRUE GOD.

Two-fold nature of Messiah; reasons for it; necessity for his divinity; the proofs that he is divine, he possesses all the attributes peculiar to God; he is the Creator and preserver of all things; he will in the last day raise the dead; he will judge the world; he is declared to be God; he is worshipped by all holy beings.

To no other being in existence can the same deep and absorbing interest attach, that invests the glorious, the sublimely mysterious character of Messiah. Contemplated from one point, he appears before us in brightness and majesty inapproachable. From another, he is seen in the depths of lowliness and humility! He is infinitely holy and pure, yet he falls a victim to divine justice. He is "God over all blessed forever," still he bleeds, and groans, and dies upon the cross! Mysteries, and contradictions, appear to shroud all that pertains to our Redeemer. He is unlike, both in his character, and in his works, any other being in heaven, or upon earth! A proper attention to the word of God, however, will soon impart every necessary explanation. We look into the holy oracles, and there learn, with equal surprise and edification, that the nature in which Messiah subsists, is two-fold. To qualify him for his great work as the Saviour of sinners, he must unite in his own person, both Divinity, and humanity. "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." As man, he is necessarily a different being from God; and as God, he is necessarily a different being from man; yet he is "*very God, and very man.*" Man only, can be the moral, or spiritual representative of man. The *second* Adam must be as was the *first*. No other is capable of being "made a curse for us."* Who else could be our propitiation, or execute the office of High Priest in our behalf? Man sinned, and man alone can make

* Gal. iii. 13.

reconciliation for sin. Our Intercessor in heaven must be man, since God is the party offended, and cannot intercede with himself. Jesus Christ is therefore properly and perfectly man. These considerations however, I shall have occasion hereafter to lay before you more distinctly, and fully. My present purpose is to demonstrate that Messiah, Jesus Christ, is not man only, but that he is also the true God.

"The doctrine of the divinity of our Lord, is not as a fact, more interesting to our *faith*, than as a principle, it is essential to our *hope*. If he were not 'the true God,' he could not be 'eternal life.' No power, or virtue, short of that which is divine, is sufficient to deliver us from our sins. Is Jesus Christ a man merely? Is he a creature, no matter how exalted? Is he not God? All men without exception, are sinners, and therefore condemned on their own account. 'The soul that sinneth it shall die.' No man can by any means, redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him." If Christ is man only, no satisfaction is made to divine justice on our behalf. No vicarious sacrifice is offered. God necessarily remains unreconciled; and death reigns supreme, over the entire fallen universe! "When pressed down by a sense of guilt, and languishing for deliverance from its power, I look around me for a Redeemer, such as my own heart, and the word of God assure me, is required, must I be directed to a mere man, a feeble being like myself? Is my Redeemer a creature, and *nothing more?* He is the proprietor of my person! My immortal spirit is his! Into his hands, when I come to die, I must commit my soul! I, the property of a *mere man!* My soul committed for eternity, into the hands of a creature! I would not thus entrust even my body, to the brightest angel that shines in the temple above. The Father of Spirits only, can have property in spirits. He alone can be our refuge in the hour of transition from the present to the ap-

proaching world." The divinity of Messiah is not questionable. Thanks to our Heavenly Father, he has given us indubitable proof, that in addition to his perfect humanity, *Jesus Christ is the true God.* We may therefore, look to him with confidence, and banish every doubt. "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him."*

There are, in the first place, certain attributes peculiar to God, and which no creature can possibly possess. These are such as eternity, omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence, and immutability. But, all these, which are inseparable from God, characterize, in their entire plenitude, Jesus Christ our Lord. Let the testimony of this fact be now considered.

1. Jesus Christ *is eternal.* I do not mean by this, merely that his being shall never end. Thus much is true also of angels, and of men. When once brought into life, neither of them will ever cease to exist. In this sense all intelligences are eternal. Messiah's is an eternity which had no beginning. It is emphatically affirmed of him by inspiration, that He who was "in the beginning with God," who is "God," in whom is "life," and by whom "all things were made," became "flesh and dwelt among us."† He also had "glory with the Father before the world was."‡ He is "that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us."§ Did Jesus Christ make all things? Then he existed before any thing was made, and consequently cannot be a creature, since a creature is a created being, and before any creation, there plainly could exist no such being. Is he "eternal life?" How is this possible unless he had always existed? His "goings forth," says the prophet, "have been from of old, from everlasting."‖ God, the Father, expresses in various portions of his word, his own eternity thus:—"Who hath

* Heb. vii. 25.
† John i. 1–14.
‡ John xvii. 5.
§ 1 John i. 2.
‖ Mic. v. 2.

wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning?" "I, Jehovah, the first and with the last." "I am the first, and I am the last; and besides me there is no God."* This very language Jesus Christ applies repeatedly to himself. "I am the first and the last.† I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last."‡ If this language describes the eternity of the Father, it can certainly mean no less, when applied to the Son. And is it credible that he, were he not eternal, would proclaim himself by the very titles which set forth the eternity of the infinite God? Jesus Christ is therefore eternal. And his eternity, like that of the Father, includes an eternity *past*, as well as an eternity *to come*. Possessing, therefore, this attribute, which belongs exclusively to God, Jesus the Messiah, is most certainly God.

2. Is Jesus Christ *omnipresent?* He who is omnipresent fills all space, and beholds all things. If we ascend to heaven; if we go down to hell; if, upon the wings of the morning, we fly to the uttermost parts of the earth, he is there to meet us in every place. Of himself, the Saviour says, "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which *is in* heaven."§ The Son of man was *there* upon earth, yet, as we see by this passage, he was at the same time also in *heaven*. To assume our nature, he had come down from heaven, and his manhood was upon earth; but he had another than his visible nature, his *divinity*, which was *confined to no place*. He who is at the same time upon earth and in heaven, as Messiah declares himself to be, is unquestionably omnipresent. Consider also his solemn promise to his people. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."‖ And to his Apostles he said, "Go

* Isa. xli. 4, and xliv. 6.
† Rev. i. 11.
‡ Rev. xxii. 13.
§ John iii. 13.
‖ Matt. xviii. 20.

ye, teach all nations, and lo, I am with you always."* But how can he be with his people in their assemblies, and with his Apostles in their ministry, at one and the same time, in all places, in every nation, if he is not omnipresent? His bodily presence in more than one place at the same time, we know is impossible. And as to his being with his followers, in affection and sympathy, as Paul declares that he was with the churches of his day, this would have amounted to very little, since every Christian is in the same manner present with all others. He is in truth, for the promises can mean no less, really with his people, and his ministers, as the omnipresent God, to direct, to defend them, and to give them comfort, and success. He who is in every place on earth, and is in heaven at the same time, must be omnipresent. Jesus Christ is thus omnipresent. But omnipresence implies immensity of nature, and is possessed by no being but God.

2. He is also *omniscient*. In other words, he knows all things. His knowledge is boundless. If he is not omniscient, what did he mean when he said; "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."† From this passage we infer that the Son's knowledge of the Father, is the same in kind, and extent, with the Father's knowledge of the Son. As the Father's knowledge is intuitive, certain, underived, so is the Son's. John speaking of Jesus says:—"He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man."‡ Before him the hearts of all men are open and plain. But such knowledge of the secret desires and motives of the human mind, is peculiar to God. "I, Jehovah, search the heart, I try the reins, even to give to every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his

* Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. † Matt. xi. 27. ‡ John ii. 24, 25.

doing."* This prerogative belongs to Jehovah. But it is claimed expressly for himself by Jesus Christ. "All the churches shall know that *I am he* who searcheth the reins and the hearts; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works."† He must therefore be Jehovah. "Thou, [God] thou only," says Solomon, "knowest the hearts of all the children of men."‡

4. His *omnipotence* is announced by himself, when he claims as his "All power in heaven and in earth."§ As Mediator and Head of the Church "all power" was "*given*" him: but he also exerted that power as the infinite God. A prophet declares, referring to the Redeemer, that the "child born," "the son given," is also "*the Mighty God*."‖ And further, it is affirmed by Jesus, that, "What things soever he [the Father] doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise."¶ Now if all power is his; if he is the mighty God; and if he does *all* that the Father does; Jesus Christ is beyond controversy omnipotent.

5. It remains for us to show that he is *immutable*. The scriptures affirm that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever."** In all ages, past, present, and to come, he is unchangeable. But this proposition will be effectually established, if we remember that Messiah is the person addressed in the following inspired language:—"And thou, Lord, in the beginning, hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment: and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed. But *thou art the same* and thy years shall not fail."†† Jesus Christ is immutable. But to ascribe immutability to a creature, is palpably absurd. God only is immutable.

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* Jer. xvii. 9, 10. † Rev. ii. 23. ‡ 1 Kings viii. 39.
§ Matt. xxviii. 18. ‖ Isa. ix. 6. ¶ John v. 19.
** Heb. xiii. 8. †† Heb. i. 10–12.

Thus we see that Jesus Christ is eternal, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, and immutable. God only possesses, or can possess, these attributes. But they are all fully possessed by Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is therefore God.

But there are many other proofs of his divinity, not less conclusive than these. To some of them let us now briefly refer.

Jesus Christ is, secondly, *the Creator* of all things, visible, and invisible. Such is the unequivocal declaration of the word of truth. "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."* Again: "The world was made by him."† And again: "By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible, and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things consist."‡ This is conclusive. God only created all things. Jesus Christ created all things. Therefore Jesus Christ is God.

He is also, thirdly, the *preserver* of all things. In the passage just adduced, it is affirmed that by Christ "all things consist;" that is, are sustained, and preserved. But can it be that this universe, this immeasurable creation, in all its magnitude, and glory, is sustained by a creature? Further. Of him, "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person," it is affirmed, that "he upholds all things by the word of his [his own] power."§ "All things" upheld, continued in existence, and order, by the efficacious will of Jesus Christ! The divine record unequivocally declares this to be true. And can any being less than God sustain the universe? He who upholds it must be God.

And, fourthly, by Jesus Christ will all the *dead*, at the last day, be *raised* from their graves. Can any power but

* John i. 3.
† John i. 10.
‡ Col. i. 6, 17.
§ Heb. i. 3.

that of God, call forth the sleeping millions of the earth? He alone who formed at first the human body, and connected with it the living spirit, can, after the dissolution of the grave, call back that spirit from the invisible world, and restore, and reanimate the sleeping dust. But that this omnipotent work is to be done by Jesus Christ, revelation expressly affirms. "The hour is coming in the which, all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, [the voice of the Son of God,] and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation."* In isolated instances, prophets, and apostles, raised the dead; but they did so professedly in the name of Jesus, and by the power of God. And those thus resuscitated, were still subject to death. But Christ, by his own authority and power, raises the dead, raises all the dead, to die no more. "I am," saith he, "the resurrection and the life."†

Fifthly. Messiah will also, in the great day of accounts, "*judge the quick* [the living on earth at his coming] *and the dead.*" "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."‡ "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, * * * * *before him* shall be gathered all nations."§ Who is to decide the destinies of all nations? Has a mere creature the rewards of heaven, and the punishments of hell, at his disposal? Christ is man, but he is more than man. "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God,"‖ and none but God can receive the account, and pronounce the judgment. He who does so, must be omnipresent to witness all things, omniscient to know every secret action and motive, omnipotent to execute, and unchangeable to

* John v. 28, 29.
† John xi. 25.
‡ 2 Cor. v. 10.
§ Matt. xxv. 31, 32.
‖ Rom. xiv. 12.

adhere to his decisions. The determination is to be made, and the destinies of all men unchangeably appointed, by Jesus Christ our Lord. He is unquestionably God.

Sixthly. The word of divine truth repeatedly affirms, and in language the most unequivocal, and emphatic, that *our Lord* JESUS CHRIST IS GOD. "The Word," says the Evangelist John, "was God."* "And," identifying the person of Immanuel, he states, "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." Again. "Unto the Son, he" Jehovah "saith, Thy throne, *O God*, is forever and ever."† Enumerating the privileges, and honors of the Jewish nation, Paul closes the summary thus, "Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all God blessed forever. Amen."‡

Finally, *All holy beings worship Christ as God.* Jehovah said, "Let all the angels of God worship him."§ And accordingly, all the redeemed bow before him, exclaiming, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, and his Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."‖ "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain," sing the angels, and with them every Christian's heart unites, "to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."¶ Baptism is an act of devotion and worship, among the most solemn and impressive which it is possible for human beings to perform. Yet this rite is commanded to be administered in his name. It is also a sacred act of consecration to him, as well as to the other persons of the ever blessed and adorable Trinity. "Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."** Divine revelation, be it remembered, distinctly forbids the worship of any being but God.

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* John i. 1, 14. † Heb. i. 8. ‡ Rom. ix. 5.
§ Heb. i. 6. ‖ Rev. i. 5, 6. ¶ Rev. v. 12.
** Matt. xxviii. 19.

"Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."* But men, and angels, are *commanded* to worship Jesus Christ. Therefore Jesus Christ is the true God, subsisting not alone, but together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, three persons in the Godhead, but one only living and eternal Jehovah.

Tell me not that a shadow of doubt rests upon the divinity of Messiah. Than this cardinal doctrine none can be more fixed and certain. How can it be otherwise? Were all the men whom God inspired to record the revelation of his truth and will, laboring under a mistake regarding Christ? Did they teach fictions? Did Christ himself assume what did not belong to him? If not, then is he certainly God. And besides, how could a mere creature, endowed with no other than human nature, answer the high demands of infinite justice in the redemption of sinners? How give an adequate expression of Jehovah's holiness, and boundless aversion to sin? There can be no proportion between the suffering of death by one man, and the eternal deliverance of us all. Despoil Messiah of his divinity, and the glory of redemption has departed! There is no redemption! Why, however, expatiate thus? He who suffered for us *did* possess divine dignity, and worth. These gave infinite value to the satisfaction he offered, and made his atonement efficacious for the pardon of all our sins.

But enough. The argument need not be further extended. Can any man of sane mind, who has all these proofs before him, and who believes the word of God, withhold his faith from that doctrine which teaches the perfect divinity of the Messiah? Surely not. The Messiah a mere man! All nature, time and eternity, Jehovah, and angels, and men, instantly contradict the affirmation. Who then is that glorious, that mysterious, that infinite being, known to us as

* Luke iv. 8.

Messiah, who possesses all the attributes and perfections of God; who is God; and who created, and now sustains all things, in heaven and on earth; who redeems millions of sinners from the wrath to come, and by his grace preserves them to eternal glory? Whom has God commanded angels, and saints, to worship? Before whom do devils fear and tremble? Who is he that raises the dead, having life in himself, to quicken whom he will? At the summons of whose voice, shall all that are in their graves come forth, and death and hell surrender their innumerable and long forgotten captives? Who is he that shall weigh, in the balances of judgment, the destinies of angels and of men, dispose of the thrones of heaven, and bestow at will, the glories of eternal life? Shall this question be submitted to the decision of reason? Shall I summon angels of light, and devils from their chains of darkness, to reply? Shall prophets and apostles answer? Shall I ask a response from heaven? All, all, exclaim, in a voice, which shakes the very foundations of the Universe, "*This is* 'THE GREAT GOD, THE SAVIOUR;' to whom be glory and majesty, dominion, and power, both now and ever. Amen."

SECTION III.

JESUS CHRIST, BY THE SACRIFICE OF HIMSELF, HAS MADE ON BEHALF OF SINNERS, AN INFINITE SATISFACTION TO DIVINE JUSTICE.

The sacrifices which prefigure the character and work of Christ, were expiatory; the Scriptures assert Christ's death to have been a substitute for the sinner's death; his divinity gave infinite worth to his sufferings; his offering was made to divine justice; his sacrifice is accepted on the principles of the covenant of redemption; the acts of the Redeemer in which the satisfaction is made; the redemption of sinners is complete.

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by the sacrifice of himself, has made on behalf of sinners, an infinite satisfaction to divine justice. This was the great design of his incarnation. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."* All his *titles*, as well as his *attributes*, have reference to his work on earth in this behalf. His name was called *Jesus*, because he should save his people from their sins. *Messiah*, and *Christ*, other appellations so frequently applied to the *Redeemer*, are of the same import. They point to him as "*the anointed*" one to whom we may look for deliverance. With his glorious divinity, he united *perfect humanity*, that he might effectually accomplish his purposes of boundless grace. "God sent forth *his Son*, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law."† "Of the seed of David according to the flesh," yet he was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."‡ This is the mysterious personage, clothed in unspeakable majesty, who assumed *our nature*, and made it his own, that he might rescue us from the dominion of death. In *our nature* divested of all impurity, he lived and obeyed the law; in our nature he suffered, died, and was buried; in

* 1 Tim. i. 15. † Gal. iv. 4, 5. ‡ Rom. i. 3, 4.

our nature he arose from the dead, and ascended up on high; and in our nature he represents us to-day, before the throne of the Eternal! Thus has he redeemed us, and more than redeemed us. He has also exalted us to distinction, and honor, above the tallest archangels, and all those who are most brilliant and glorious in the ranks of radiant Cherubim, and Seraphim. Thanks, endless praise, to our God, for his rich, his infinite blessings!

We have assumed that *the satisfaction on behalf of sinners, made by our Lord Jesus Christ, was a true expiation.*

The correctness of this doctrine will be obvious, if you consider *the character of the offerings by which the atonement of Messiah was prefigured.* To these I had occasion to refer in a former chapter, somewhat at large. They were, as I then showed, instituted *by Jehovah*, immediately after the fall of our first parents, and commanded to be constantly observed in his worship. Their professed design was strictly to point out the character and work of the Redeemer. Were *they* not all, the substitution of victims in the place of those by whom they were offered, as vicarious oblations? And they were rendered efficacious in the forgiveness of sins, only by faith in the great offering to be made "in the fulness of time," by the Son of God himself. He, of whatever nation, who intelligently, brought an offering *for sacrifice,* in that act confessed himself a sinner before God. When the trembling animal was slain, the worshipper thereby acknowledged that death was his own just desert, as the penalty of his transgressions; and when the life, and body, and blood, of the victim were laid upon the altar, a supplication for pardon, the hope was thus expressed, of escape from the consequences of sin, by the sufferings of another. These several considerations were invariably connected with sacrifices from the beginning of time, among both Gentiles and Jews. The victim, when the service was understood, was always regarded as having taken the place of him for whom it was

offered. Can we, with these facts before us, fail to perceive that Jesus Christ, the great antitype, and substance of all sacrifices, must have been substituted in the place of sinners? Can the figure be one thing, and the reality another, and a different thing? If not, his sufferings and death were certainly *expiatory*. Jesus Christ suffered for us, "the just for the unjust." Not as some have unfortunately, and with strange inconsistency imagined, only to give us a distinguished *example* of patience, firmness, and perseverance in that which is holy and just. Nor was it merely *to confirm the truth of his doctrine* that he went to the cross. Such conceptions of the design of his mission are as unworthy of him, as they are plainly unscriptural and untrue. They degrade immeasurably, both his dignity and benevolence. Nor is this all. They place by the side of Jesus as worthy *compeers*, many saints and martyrs of various ages, and countries, who as respects both undeviating adherence amidst persecutions and sufferings, to what they believed to be the will of God, and readiness to seal their testimony to the truth with their blood, have borne themselves in a manner little less illustrious than did the Redeemer himself. Tell me not that these were exclusively, his purposes. He designed infinitely more. By *his* death he intended to avert *our* death, and reserve us to everlasting life. He came to make satisfaction to divine justice for our sins; to offer on our behalf an adequate atonement.

But *the expiatory character of Christ's sufferings*, is established by testimony still more strong and conclusive. *It is constantly, and expressly affirmed, by the word of God.*

This doctrine is vital in all its bearings and relations. Remove it, and the Gospel would be nothing more than a mere system of ethics. It would indeed, cease to be the Gospel, since it would no longer contain the "good tidings of great joy," upon which even angels look with unutterable delight. We are not therefore, surprised to find it perpetu-

ally held up before us, in all parts of divine revelation, by prophets, by evangelists, by apostles, and by the Saviour himself. Turn your thoughts for a moment, to their teachings. "All we, like sheep," says Isaiah, "have gone astray, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."* Paul says, that, "For a *good* man some [men] would even dare to die; but God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners [yet enemies to him, yet abominably wicked,] Christ died for us."† "He gave his life a ransom for all."‡ "He who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we in him, might be made the righteousness of God."§ Peter asserts the same great truth. Christ "his own self, bare our sins in his own body on the tree."‖ And Messiah confirms the testimony by the declaration that, "The Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many."** Who that is endowed with ordinary intelligence, can readily mistake the sense of these passages? Our iniquities were laid upon him; he gave his life a ransom, to buy us back from captivity to sin and death; he died for us as one man gives his life to save the life of another man: God made him to be sin [a sin offering] for us: he bare our sins; he died for all; was made a curse for us; suffered the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God; appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. What language to express the expiatory nature of Christ's sufferings, could be employed which would be stronger, or less ambiguous? Further proof is useless. That he died a substitute for the guilty; that his sacrifice was on behalf of sinners; that it was his purpose to secure by its merits as a satisfaction to offended justice, their pardon, and salvation, is most evident. No one who credits the word of God, can consistently, call this great truth in question.

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* Isa. liii. 6.
‡ 1 Tim. ii. 6.
‖ 1 Peter ii. 24.
† Rom. v. 7, 8.
§ 2 Cor. v. 21.
** Matt. xx. 28.

We next consider the *extent* of the satisfaction on behalf of sinners, made by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Was it ample for every desired purpose? Was it really infinite in virtue, and efficacy, wherever applied? How could this be? Many a man, we are told, has suffered apparently, as much as did the Redeemer! And did he actually endure all that would have been inflicted on the aggregate redeemed? His miseries were temporary. Theirs would have been eternal. His sorrows were all concentrated in one person. Theirs would have been distributed among millions. Many others besides him, have been perfidiously betrayed, tortured, and crucified. How then, could his sufferings be *even equivalent* to the sufferings of all his people? And if they were not, how, we are asked, could stern justice accept them as a satisfaction, and pronounce the full deliverance of sinners? Those who perplex themselves with these, and similar inquiries, and thus unnecessarily become involved in an inextricable labyrinth of difficulties and obscurities, forget the most important fact connected with the whole subject; a fact which I have endeavored thus far to keep distinctly before your mind; I mean *the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ.* The accumulation upon him of a specific amount of suffering, was not a matter of so much consequence to the result, as the divine nature with which he was invested. Had he been a creature merely, his miseries intense and agonizing as they were, beyond the power of human thought to conceive, could not have been clothed with more than ordinary virtue, or efficacy. The actions of a finite being can never be infinite in degree, or value. No multiplication of finite quantities can amount to infinity. An infinite satisfaction in any sense, would in that case, have been impossible. But our Redeemer is, as we have seen, God as well as man. The divinity alone is not the Christ; nor is the humanity alone the Christ; *the Christ is the united divinity and humanity;* and it was the

Christ that died; it was the blood of the Son of God that was shed; it was the Lord of glory who was crucified! "His work is perfect." It is of infinite value, and efficacy. Was it necessary that the sufferings of such a victim should be prolonged? Must his sacrifice be repeated? Could its magnitude, or excellency, be thereby augmented? Far from it. "By one offering *he* hath *perfected forever* them that are sanctified."* To his satisfaction for sin nothing can be added. It is full. It is complete.

This infinite satisfaction on behalf of sinners, by our Lord Jesus Christ, I now remark, was made *to divine Justice.*

Justice is outraged by our transgressions. Its claims must be honored. Already has it pronounced our condemnation. Its nature is inflexible. The propitiation offered by Messiah contemplated more than mere clemency. He interposed not alone, that through him the Father might extend *mercy* to us, miserable offenders. Mercy had already been exercised in the gift of his Son. *His special object was the declaration of the justice of God, in our forgiveness, and salvation.* This truth is sufficiently established by a single glance at the "Oracles of the Most High." By them we have the repeated assurance that we are, "Justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his *righteousness* for the remission of sins. To declare I say [adds the apostle] his righteousness, that he might be *just*, and the *justifier* of him that believeth in Jesus."† Against all such, who by the divine arrangement is thenceforth identified with Christ, as one with him, and inseparable from him, justice has no further charge. God is not simply *merciful*, he is *just* in their justification. In all this—the death of our Lord Jesus Christ in the place of our death; the satisfaction thus made; and its admission and acceptance

* Heb. x. 11–15. † Rom. iii. 24–26.

by divine justice, as ample for us—how profound our reasons for gratitude and rejoicing! "God is for us." Our prospect therefore, is full of hope. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

Another inquiry here presses upon our attention, more full if possible, of interest and importance, than those considerations already submitted. Upon *what principle* does God accept the sacrifice of Christ Jesus, as infinitely satisfactory for the pardon, and salvation of all who believe on him?

God I answer, most evidently accepts the sacrifice of Christ Jesus as infinitely satisfactory for the pardon and salvation of all who believe on him, upon the principle of his own sovereign *agreement*. *The love of the Father*, which we have already considered, and which was equally the love of the whole Trinity, of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, *was the purpose of grace* dwelling in his heart. *The voluntary offer of the Son*, in accordance with his own declaration, "I lay down my life of myself," *to redeem and save us*, was made. This plan of deliverance, God was pleased benevolently, to *approve, accept, and appoint*. In our justification by grace, through faith in Christ therefore, he acts in compliance with the arrangement brought into being, and executed, by his own indescribable wisdom and goodness.

Contained in this transaction, teeming with boundless grace, we behold the Covenant of Redemption. Messiah is "the *surety* of a better testatment" than the law.* And what is a surety, but one who voluntarily *engages* to fulfil certain obligations which belong to another? "I have," said Jehovah, "made a *covenant with my chosen*."† And who but the eternal Son was his chosen? Christ Jesus "is that eternal life which was promised before the foundation of

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* Heb. vii. 22. † Ps. lxxxix. 3.

the world."* But before the foundation of the world, to whom other than the Son, could the promise have been made? It was not made to angels; and men did not exist. He was the *elect;* the chosen; the appointed of the Father.† And to what could he have been chosen, or appointed, but to the office of Redeemer? "The *counsel of peace* was between them both."‡ It was between the Father and the Son. In agreement with the plan thus rapidly sketched, God the Father appoints the grace, and gives his Son; God the Son sustains the curse, and makes the atonement; and God the Holy Ghost consummates the glorious design, by applying personally, to the hearts of individual sinners, who penitently, and in faith seek the purchased blessings, all the merits of the great sacrifice. Thus he "sanctifies, and makes us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." It is therefore, most true that, "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb, without blemish, and without spot, who verily was *foreordained* before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God."§ He is the "Lamb slain [the sacrifice offered] from the *foundation* of the world."‖ We have, in these facts and considerations, developed in the plainest manner, the *principle* upon which the Father accepts the sacrifice of the Son on behalf of sinners. It is *his own* eternal, and holy, and gracious *ordination.* Nor may we question his acts. It is enough for us to know that they are all just, and righteous in themselves, and designed to secure alike, his own honor, and the best interests of all his creatures.

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* 1 John i. 2.
† Isa. xlii. 1.
‡ Zech. vi. 13.
§ 1 Pet. i. 18–21.
‖ Rev. xiii. 8.

In consonance with these teachings, proceed all the instructions of our Lord Jesus Christ, on the subject now before you. He was under no *natural* obligation to lay down his life for us. Whatever was binding upon him in this matter, was wholly *conventional.* Impelled by pure, disinterested, holy love, he became our surety with the full knowledge of our utter insolvency, and that he must himself alone, pay all the mighty debt. "There was no man" to help him. Therefore, "*his* arm brought salvation."* When Messiah came into the world, he said to the Father, "Lo I come to *do thy will,* O God."† But how could his mission, and death, be the execution of the *will of God,* and previously revealed in his word ("In the volume of the book it is written of me") if they had not been *before appointed?* To the Jews he said:—"I lay down my life [a sacrifice for sinners] that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself [willingly; voluntarily; of design.] This commandment [that is, the commandment to do this] have I received of my Father."‡ And in the appalling agony of that last night of suffering, hear his prayer uttered in Gethsemane. "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." "But how then shall the *Scriptures be fulfilled* that thus it must be?"§ "Father, *thy will* be done."‖ Was not all that our blessed Redeemer did—does he not so assure us—done, expressly, by the appointment and will of the Father?

The conclusion to which we are conducted by the facts and arguments now submitted, is most obvious. If "before the foundation of the world," our Lord Jesus Christ voluntarily assumed to take the place of sinners, and to give his life for theirs; if his offer (O, what love and mercy to us, is thus evinced!) was approved, and accepted, and he was

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* Isa. lix. 16.
‡ John x. 17, 18.
Mark xiv. 36.
† Heb. x. 7–10.
§ Matt. xxvi. 54.

appointed by the Father to redeem us, and had the promise of the Holy Ghost, that he would, to believing penitents, personally apply the merits of his oblation; if thus, a Covenant of Redemption was established and confirmed; if its provisions have all been fully executed by Messiah, the anointed, who in our nature, made on behalf of sinners, the required sacrifice; if infinite merit attaches to his offering; and if in him, divine justice is entirely vindicated, and honored; God necessarily, by his own sovereign agreement, must accept for us, the satisfaction presented by his only begotten, and beloved Son. Thanks to our Heavenly Father, the glorious work is done; the propitiation is complete; our redemption is perfect; God is reconciled; and salvation is proclaimed to all, who by faith, embrace the terms of deliverance, made known in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you inquire to what works of Christ, more particularly, we attribute our redemption? He did nothing, I answer, neither in his life, nor in his death, which had not direct regard to the great object of his mission, "to save sinners."

During all the period of his sojourn upon earth, his blessed work was in progress. His *life* was devoted to the fulfilment of the law. Not to destroy or *abolish* it, did he come, but to meet, and to honor all its demands. His teaching reflected the purity, the spirituality, and the light of heaven itself. In his own person the truths he inculcated, and the obedience to God, and the love and benevolence to man, characteristic of his religion, were perfectly, beautifully, impressively exemplified. In respect to his life, when it was about to close, he said in his prayer to the Father, "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have *finished* the work which thou gavest me to do."* Next came the scenes of his sufferings and death.

One of his disciples, suborned and bribed by the Chief

* John xvii. 4.

Priests and Rulers, who hated him for his goodness, and who sought to destroy him from envy, betrayed and delivered him into their hands. Unresistingly he yielded, and submitted to their cruel indignities, in unmurmuring silence. See him before the National Council of the Jews, whence had now fled every principle of humanity and justice. Convulsed with rage, and burning with malice, the members of that body, once august, but now sunk into the depths of depravity, taunt, reproach, and insult him. Their spirit is caught by the crowd of soldiers, and others present, who repeat *their* mockings, and contumely. Thou art a king, said they. And they placed upon him a purple robe! A crown too, is a royal appendage. They plaited one of thorns, and pressed it with its piercing points, upon his temples! A merchant's measuring reed was there. This they put into his hand for a sceptre! The savage laugh rang through those sacred halls! Then, in derision they bowed the knee, before him, exclaiming, "Hail *king* of the Jews!" and took the reed from his hand, and smote him, and spit upon him. They at last pronounced his condemnation, and tumultuously conducted him to the bar of Pilate, from whom they extorted the sentence that he might be *scourged, and crucified*. When he had suffered the torturing lash until his flesh was torn, and his person covered with blood, forth to Calvary they hurried him, loaded with the instrument of his torture. He proceeded tottering and fainting under the burden. There they extend him upon the wood, and driving the nails through his hands, and his feet, they rear the cross on high. He is suspended before the scoffing multitude! In every stage of this horrible procedure, all the elements of humiliation, ignominy, and pain, are concentrated upon the meek and unresisting victim. Nothing was omitted which successful and frantic malice could invent, calculated to add bitterness to the cup of agony and shame which they pressed to his lips. And this

was the affectionate, the benevolent, the infinitely compassionate Saviour! This was he whose mission was to redeem even these very persecutors, from sin.

Thus hung Messiah. His body quivers in every nerve, with unstrung pain! Behold the sufferer! An hour passes, a long, long hour, and his frame is agonized with a conflict growing each moment, deeper and deeper! Another tedious hour is gone, and he sinks more, and more. Another is nearly measured. He is rapidly failing! He is almost exhausted! The last struggle now convulses him! Hear! He "cries with a loud voice, *It is finished.*" He sinks! See! He bows his head! He gives up the Ghost! He is motionless! His bosom heaves no more! His sufferings are over! A soldier approaches him. He thrusts his spear into his side. It penetrates his heart. Forth issues blood, and water! But he moves not! *He is dead!* Hark! Heard you the rolling of that deep thunder? See you the lightnings that flash, and leap, and blaze along the sky? Feel you the rocking of the earth? What terrific scenes are these! All nature is seized with astonishment and fear! The rocks are bursting asunder! The veil of the temple—that type of Messiah's humanity—which curtained from mortal view the most holy place, is rent by unseen hands, from the top to the bottom! The sun in mid-heaven seems blotted out; and the universe, from the sixth to the ninth hour, is shrouded in thick darkness! The rage of the multitude gives place to alarm, and they flee towards the city, smiting upon their breasts, and exclaiming, "Surely this was the Son of God."

The horrors of that scene passed, nature assumed its wonted course. But there, pale, mangled and gory still hung the Saviour's body upon the cross. Kind friends, with aching hearts, having begged of the governor his remains, took him down, and affectionately laid him in the grave. Still afraid of him though dead; and lest he should

as he had told them, arise from the tomb; but under *pretence* that his disciples might come by night and steal him away, the Rulers dispatched a band of soldiers, securely to guard his sepulchre. Around the grave where lay the Redeemer was thenceforth heard day and night, the measured tread of the armed Roman sentinel! "The enemies of Christ now exulted in their success; but the hearts of his friends were sunk in despondency, and sorrow." Time passed on. The third morning dawned in rosy beauty; and with it came his glorious resurrection! He had descended into the dominions of death, and there conquered the destroyer! Amid renewed wonders of nature, earthquakes, the shaking of the heavens, throngs of shining angels, and the waking bodies of many saints, who came forth from their tombs, Jesus arose! And now joy and gladness everywhere mingle with the amazement of his people. He was alive among them, with the marks upon him of all his cruel wounds! They durst not ask him who he was. They knew he was Jesus. Often, and in various ways, he associated with them during forty days. Every proof of his identity, and the reality of all these truths, was satisfactorily applied. The most doubtful were fully convinced. All rested in delighted confidence. He has arisen from the dead. "He has led captivity captive."

And now the time was come that he should return to his glory above. Having on the mount of Olives, gathered around him his disciples, and given them their final commission respecting his earthly kingdom, nothing more remained to be done: and as he affectionately blessed them, he arose, and ascended up into heaven. They gazed upon him until a bright cloud received him out of their sight. He is gone! Gone to prepare the mansions of heaven for the reception of his people! When they shall have finished their pilgrimage on earth, he will call them home to the skies, where they will dwell in his presence forever.

The work of redemption is complete. "Christ died for our sins, and rose again for our justification." His "life was cut off from the earth." The last drop of blood in his heart was poured forth. His body was exposed upon the cross. If the scourge, the nails, and the spear, were in the hands of sinners, who were moved to the infliction of his sufferings by malignant cruelty, all this serves but the more to enhance the grace which could impel him to die for his enemies. His life, his body, his blood, his soul, his divinity, were offered; offered by himself as the great High Priest; offered to God, a supplication of unlimited power and efficacy, for our pardon, sanctification, and salvation. God hears, approves, accepts the satisfaction, and saves all who trust in the Redeemer.

SECTION IV.

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IS OUR GREAT AND GLORIOUS INTERCESSOR, AND ADVOCATE.

Necessity of an Intercessor; Jesus Christ sustains that office; his qualifications for it; his advocacy for us in heaven; results it secures.

To COMPLETE the work of reconciliation between sinful man and his Maker, for which our Lord Jesus Christ died and rose again, Jehovah has thought proper to make necessary the intervention of an Advocate, or Intercessor. The satisfaction of Christ, before any one can be saved by it, must be individually applied. Those who are approved must be previously, predoomed, and sanctified. Only the holy can be saved. But who among depraved and corrupt sinners, wishes to be holy? All desire to escape evil, and to obtain future happiness. But to these ends personal reconciliation to God is indispensable. In their own character as sinners however, men have no access to him. Wherewith shall we approach Jehovah? How shall we come into his presence? An Intercessor in our behalf, an Advocate with the Father, is absolutely essential. Such a friend we have in heaven, in the person of our own glorious Redeemer. "Through him," and through him only, "we have access unto the Father."* "You that were some time alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh, through death, to present you holy, and unblamable, and unreprovable in his sight."†

The Intercession, or Advocacy of Jesus Christ, is a work which belongs to his great office as Mediator between God and man. The Mediation commenced with the origin of the covenant of redemption. The suspension of the divine wrath when man sinned, so far as to arrest the

* Eph. ii. 18. † Col. i. 21, 22.

immediate execution of the sentence of death; the bestowment of divine revelation; his own mission to our earth, and death upon the cross; the gift of the Holy Spirit to regenerate, and sanctify us; were so many departments belonging to his office as Mediator. Christ alone was qualified for this great work.

He who is Mediator—reconciles the parties at variance—must in some respects, be a different person from either offending man, or the offended Jehovah. Such Jesus Christ is constituted by his incarnation. Although the true God, he is also perfectly man, and therefore, essentially different from either God or man. He is qualified consequently, to interpose as a third person, "*a daysman*, to place his hands upon both," and to make "peace by the blood of his cross." He, although man, is not implicated in sin, the cause that placed God and man in a state of spiritual antagonism. "He was without sin."* "*Such* a High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners."† He was also independent in an important sense, of all other authority than his own. Redemption demanded the sacrifice of life. "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission" of sins.‡ But neither men, nor angels, had any such been found willing, or desirous to offer *their* life a sacrifice, had the ability to do so. They are all the property of their Creator, and have no license to dispose of the life which he has given them for his own purposes. They dare not do so, but in accordance with his instructions. They must await his commands. Jesus Christ alone, possessed the right, and the power, to "*lay down* his life, and to *take it again*." And *he* did lay down his life of *himself*. Having assumed our nature, he as God, had authority to make any disposition of it which might be required, as the instrument of accomplishing whatever service was necessary to promote the

* Heb. iv. 15. † Heb. vii. 26. ‡ Heb. ix. 22.

designs of his government, and the interests of our fallen race. He accordingly presented it as a pure oblation to the Father for our ransom from sin, and reconciliation to him.

Jesus Christ alone, is qualified to be our Mediator for another reason. He only has paramount influence both with the Father, and with sinners, whose reconciliation makes his office necessary. God's displeasure against sinners must be removed. Man's aversion to holiness must be overcome. God and man must be brought into harmonious intercourse, and communion. But how can this be done? Who is able to achieve the result? He only, who laid down his life for us. Him the Father heareth always.* And has not Messiah equal influence over *men?* What power is he not able to exert in our hearts by means of his word and Spirit? His *word* enlightens our minds, and prepares us for his service, by affording the requisite knowledge. And by his *Spirit* he has access to the secret springs of action in our souls. Jesus Christ sends his *Spirit* into our hearts, to persuade *us* by a sweet, gentle, and effectual energy. *He* gives us such a manifestation of the wrath, and the mercy of God, of the hopelessness of a contest with Jehovah, and the happiness flowing from his favor, as brings us humbly to supplicate peace, and with eager joy, and gratitude, to embrace the offered reconciliation. It is the Spirit of God, sent into our hearts, by our Lord Jesus Christ, who casts down all our high thoughts, subdues our proud imaginations, and leads captive the willing soul to the cross of a bleeding Saviour. When Jesus Christ condescends thus to solicit, who can decline compliance? The claims of his blood, the attractions of his grace, are irresistible. Thus we see that the influence of our glorious Advocate with both God and sinners, to bring them into a state of reconciliation, is boundless.

And he executes his office as first author. I further remark,

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* John xi. 42.

not in heaven only, but also upon earth; and in both his natures, the human and the divine. In *heaven* he is man. He carried our nature with him on high, and there represents *us* before the throne of Jehovah. On *earth* he is God, sending into our hearts his Spirit, renewing our natures, reigning over his Church, as their Prophet, Priest, and King, and performing all those acts which involve sovereign authority, and unlimited power.

Another delightful consideration in connection with this subject demands a moment's thought. To him our great Advocate and Intercessor, we may ever have free access. In him we may fully confide. Into his communion we may enter without hesitation or fear. Not a repulsive feature is found in his character. All is loveliness, and attraction. He affectionately invites us to throw ourselves into his arms; to commit ourselves to his protection, and guidance; and to intrust to him all our dearest interests, for time, and for eternity. Hear his language:—"Fear not; I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive forevermore; and have the keys of hell, and death."* "I will give to him that is athirst, of the fountain of the water of life freely."† "All things are yours."‡ Such are the terms in which *he* addresses *us*, *who* is our brother, who has borne our afflictions, and suffered our infirmities. We may therefore, confide in him, and expect from him always, the warmest sympathy, the tenderest affection.

Seldom do any of the apostles, or other inspired writers, refer to this most pleasing subject, but with an enthusiasm that rises, and swells, and glows in every sentence. The intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ, his advocacy before our Father in heaven, how *could* they, how can *we*, speak of it, without the deepest emotion? "Who," says Paul, "shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is *God* that

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* Rev. i. 17, 18. † Rev. xxi. 6. ‡ 1 Cor iii. 22.

justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is *Christ* that died; yea rather, who is *risen* again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh *intercession* for us."* "He is able to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by him, seeing *he* ever liveth to make *intercession* for them."† John beautifully, and affectionately says:—"My little children, I write unto you that ye sin not; but if any man sin, we have an *Advocate* with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And *he* [our Advocate] is the *propitiation* for our sins."‡ Thus does he bring us reconciled to God, preserve us amid the temptations and snares of the world, and sanctify, and fit us to enter into his glory above.

Our adorable Advocate on high predicates his intercession for us, not upon the plea of *our* innocence of crime. Had we *not sinned*, we should need no advocate. Nor does he plead our works of righteousness, however numerous, and benevolent. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us."§ Our duties as Christians, being conformed to his word, and accomplished under the influence of the Spirit of grace, he accepts, and approves. He himself inspired the desire of obedience. Our evil works he mercifully pardons, through the intercessions of the Redeemer. *We* have no merit to recommend us; but *his* merits are boundless. Justice demands our blood; he presents his own.

> "The bleeding wounds he bears,
> Received on Calvary,
> *They* pour effectual prayers,
> *They* strongly plead for me."

He also intercedes with a perfect knowledge of the character and wants of all his people. He knows our ignorance, our imperfections, our multiplied temptations. His attentions to us are never intermitted. We can

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* Rom. viii. 33, 34.
† Heb. vii. 25.
‡ 1 John ii. 1, 2.
§ Tit. iii. 5.

never approach his throne, and find him indisposed to give us audience. The *Father* also, is full of grace. The advocacy of the Son is not needed to remind him of any thing he might otherwise forget, or which he is reluctant to grant. But God has been pleased to appoint Messiah, as the only medium of our admission to his favor. Therefore "no man cometh unto the Father but by him." He watches over us with the kindest solicitude, bears with our errors, and shields us from harm, by throwing around us the mantle of love. And for whom does he intercede? For all, I answer, "who come unto God by him." All who approach the Father in his name, plead his merits, rely upon his great sacrifice, are the objects of his intercession. Are any excluded? Those only, who exclude themselves. All are invited to come unto him. Do you refuse? The fault, and sin, are wholly your own. Draw nigh to God, conscious of your guilt, confessing your sins with humble penitence, and trusting in him "who died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." He will undertake your cause, and his all-prevailing intercession shall bring you to salvation.

I now remark that there is no other Advocate, or Intercessor, with the Father, but our Lord Jesus Christ. He himself says:—"No man cometh unto the Father but by *me*."* Shall we then, look to any other? But *angels* are interested for us, and so are glorified *saints* on high. They, we are sometimes told, can approach God in our behalf. Would they not delight to do so? Since we ask our fellow-beings on earth, to pray for us, why may we not, if we do not worship them as divine, solicit saints and angels in heaven to pray, or intercede, for us? We may not, I answer, because the practice so far from being justified, is not even countenanced by divine revelation. Saints on earth are with us. They hear what we say to them. They unite in our prayers, and

* John xiv. 6.

pray for us. This is enjoined, and sanctioned, with the assurance that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." But saints and angels in heaven, are in a distant world; they are creatures, and can as such, exist only in one place; they do not, they cannot hear our supplications addressed to them; therefore we dare not call upon any of them as Intercessors. To do so is superstition, and folly. We dare not invoke these heavenly beings, because the practice, where it has existed, has always led directly to the worship of saints, and angels, which is idolatry. To regard them as intercessors must be consequently, criminal in the highest degree. It is to stultify ourselves; it is to turn away from Christ; it is to adhere to creatures; creatures who cannot hear us, who cannot help us. He who does so dishonors our blessed Redeemer, and degrades both his religion, and himself. Adorable Saviour, we look only to thee. Thou alone art our Advocate. Thou alone art our Intercessor. Thou art attentive to every want; sufficient for every emergency; and wilt save all who put their trust in thee.

The results secured by the intercession of our Lord, are of the most glorious character. One of which is the acceptance of the persons and services of his people.

When we believed, we were received into the favor of God. But left to ourselves, how long should we have retained that happy position? Every day, we fall into sin. Every day therefore, the fellowship between God and us would be fatally broken, did not our adorable Advocate interpose, and obtain our pardon, and the continuance of the divine favor. We provoke the displeasure, and incur the chastisement of the Most High, but he so pleads for us that we do not fall under his curse. Our best services are exceedingly imperfect. Our motives are often defective. We are wanting in intenseness of feeling, and affection. Our love is often divided between God and the world. The law demands positive perfection. Its requirements are not in consequence of Christ's

death, in any degree abated. Were therefore, our holiest services measured by this standard, they would all appear absolutely worthless. Justice is the rule by which all who approach him in their own name, must be judged? And shall we be thus tried? If so, the consequences must be disastrous to all our hopes. Our persons, and services, must be inevitably rejected. But our great Intercessor pleads our cause, and on the grounds of his own satisfaction, secures our acceptance. We "offer to God our sacrifices by him,"* because they are pleasing only, when presented through the Son, from whom they receive all their excellency and virtue.

Another result of his intercession is the preservation of his followers in a state of grace.

Our stability in the divine life, is not a consequence of our own wisdom, and vigilance, and activity, but of his unmerited favor, who said, "Because I live ye shall live also."† The evil of our hearts would have carried us away long ago, had he not bestowed meantime, such supplies of grace as turned us back, before we had passed the boundaries of salvation. He preserves alive our faint and languid graces. Our holy dispositions he keeps from expiring. Thus we live on, amidst fears, and failures, and dangers, sustained alone by our adorable Intercessor, until the feeble germ of spiritual life now in our bosoms, at last bursts forth into the immortal vigor and luxuriance of the paradise above.

One more result of his advocacy I will be allowed to mention. It is the eternal happiness of all his followers.

He will not cease until his great object shall have been completed. The mansions he has prepared, shall be peopled with the redeemed of all nations. Behold the shining ranks! How countless! How unspeakably happy! His prayer has already gone forth:—"Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may be-

* Heb. xiii. 15. † John xiv. 19.

hold my glory."* Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father."† But the period will come when Jehovah will have "made up his jewels." And then, since nothing will remain to be done, the mediatorial office in all its parts, will cease. "He must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet." "Then cometh the end." "He shall deliver up the [mediatorial] kingdom to God, even the Father." "God is now all in all."‡ Time is extinguished, and eternity rolls onward its endless course.

How rich, how surprising the grace which comes to us through our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our great Mediator, our only Advocate with God; who predicates his intercessions for us upon his own great sacrifice; who carries on his work on earth and in heaven, in both his human and divine nature; who secures the acceptance with the Father, of our persons, and services; our continuance in a state of grace; and the eternal happiness of all his followers in heaven; and whose intercession shall continue until all the purposes of his mercy are fully consummated. "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

We here close this chapter. We have seen as we have advanced, that *our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom alone sinners obtain salvation*, possesses qualifications for our redemption, and full deliverance, which are in every respect, infinitely perfect. He is the promised Messiah; he is the eternal God; in his life, and in his death, he made on behalf of sinners, an infinite satisfaction to divine justice; and to complete the designs of boundless goodness, he is the great Advocate, our adorable Intercessor in heaven. Well then may it be said with reference to the provisions necessary for your salvation, that "all things are now ready." The work is finished.

How glorious to us miserable offenders, is the redemption

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* John xvii. 24. † Matt xiii. 43. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 24-28.

wrought out by our Lord Jesus Christ! What Christian heart can contemplate it, in all its grandeur, and excellence, and beauty, without unspeakable wonder, and joy! In heaven, as well as upon earth, it is the theme of perpetual delight, and praise. Hear you the songs of that shining multitude, whose anthem swells forever, with increasing harmony? Their strain is responsive to the sentiment which pervades every bosom:—"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory, and dominion, forever and ever. Amen." "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." Behold the ranks of glorious harpers! How full of mingled rapture, and majesty, their exultation! Hell too, feels the influence of the theme. In the dark caverns of perdition are those who have rejected his salvation, and gone down to the world of woe? The memory of all they have done, and of all they have lost, O it gives an agony to their wailings, which come up forever, and mingle in horrible cadence with the groans of demons, from the depths of infinite ruin! *His great sacrifice!* It makes an impression wide as the range of intelligent existence, deep as the depths of destruction, and enduring as the ages of eternity! Our world was degraded, blasted by the withering curse of sin. But as the theatre of redemption, it has been restored to honor, incomparable honor! It has been witness to many great events, but to none which can compare with this, in all the elements of surpassing glory. Behold it, the battle-field of the universe! The arena upon which holiness and sin truth and error, life and death, wage perpetual conflict, and strive for the victory! Nor are you alone concerned. Archangels day and night, and Saints, and Elders round the throne, old in the years of heaven, gaze upon the scene with intensest emotion! Who then can be indifferent? Let your heart be awakened? All that is dear to you in time, and in

great eternity, is staked upon the issue. From the skies comes forth the voice of the Redeemer, in tones of admonition, and encouragement. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, as I have overcome, and am set down with my Father in his throne." "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

CHAPTER V.

A PERSONAL UNION WITH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, IS NECESSARY TO THE SALVATION OF SINNERS.

The conditions of salvation; conviction of sin; prayer; repentance; faith in Christ; salvation by grace.

As transgressors, our moral condition was desperate, but the satisfaction to divine justice, in our behalf, made by our Lord Jesus Christ, is ample and complete. In the preceding chapters we have attentively considered both the bane, and the remedy. How, I now ask, are fallen and depraved men to become actual partakers of the benefits of the satisfaction? Before us stand both the sinner, and the redemption, but the redemption is not applied to the sinner. They are not brought together! How is this great work to be accomplished? "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins."* "We have *redemption* by *his* blood."† From these premises does not the conclusion naturally follow, that all men, since "he died for all," will, through his sacrifice, and irrespective of any other conditions, be saved? This opinion is not without its advocates. But it can never be successfully maintained. Have we not already demonstrated at length, the melancholy truth that, in their sins, under the power of corruption, and depravity, men are utterly *incapable* of salvation? Their unholy dispositions and affections, must be removed, and those of an opposite character implanted, *before* their happiness is *possible.* Salvation therefore, has conditions other than the abstract satisfaction rendered by our Lord Jesus Christ. This fact is admitted by all, even by those who profess to believe in the final deliverance of all the race, since *they* teach that at death,

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* Acts xiii. 39.

† Eph. i. vii.

or by future sufferings, or in some other way, a moral change occurs that qualifies the soul for happiness. There are then, conditions of salvation. What are these conditions?

Allow me here, to recall your attention to one fact especially, already considered, and which I desire that you carefully remember. The atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ is A SATISFACTION. And what is a satisfaction? Is it not something with which any one having a *claim*, is content? It may be the whole of that which is due; or it may be a part of it only; or it may be something else instead of it. If accepted as sufficient, although an entirely different thing from that which was originally demanded, it is a satisfaction. This precisely, is what has occurred in our redemption. The claim of divine justice was the death of the transgressors themselves. Jesus Christ our Lord interposed, and offered to give *his* life for *our* life. His offer was accepted; he suffered "for our sins" upon the cross; and his death was admitted as *a satisfaction*. Not the very thing was done, which the law originally required; but that was done with which the law was satisfied. In our adorable substitute, infinite justice received full indemnity, and honor. But in all this, is any thing yet effected to change personally, the moral character of men, and qualify them for heaven? Although redeemed, they are individually, we all know, still depraved and sinful. Their nature is the same that it was before. We now ask, whose right it is to declare *the conditions* upon which the benefits of Christ's death shall be transferred to guilty men? Is it not the prerogative of Christ himself? Indeed, is not this a duty absolutely incumbent on the great Head of the Church? And has he not fixed, recorded, and promulgated these conditions in his word? This word he has commanded his people to make known to "all nations," and "to every creature" that dwells upon the round earth. Even a cursory study of the Bible must convince every one, that sinners are *not* set free by the sacri-

fice of Christ alone, in itself considered; but that, on the contrary, they *remain under guilt*, and condemnation, until they give their personal consent to the terms of their deliverance, by compliance with *the divinely prescribed conditions* of salvation.

And now the inquiry recurs, what are these conditions? They are, I answer, by inspired teachers, thus summarily stated:—"Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ."* "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."† "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish."‡ "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."§ These are the terms of salvation. And while they are honorable to God, they are those only, which are safe, and appropriate to men. They are "simple, reasonable, necessary, just, benevolent." He who is not sorry for his sins,—does not repent—and who shall refuse to receive with affection, and confidence, the blessed Saviour—believe in our Lord Jesus Christ—never can be reconciled to God. Such a man cannot dwell in heaven, or be capable of its high and holy joys. Those who are saved, must therefore, embrace the offered satisfaction, by "REPENTANCE TOWARDS GOD, AND FAITH TOWARDS OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST." But what is *repentance?* What is *faith?* What exercises of the mind are *associated* with them? What are their *results?* Let us consider these inquiries separately.

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* Acts xx. 21.
† Mark xxvi. 16.
‡ Luke xiii. 3.
§ Acts xvi. 31.

SECTION I.

REPENTANCE IS ALWAYS PRECEDED AND ACCOMPANIED BY CONVICTION OF SIN.

Nature of conviction of sin; its influence upon the mind; it may be suppressed; means to preserve and cherish it; its practical importance.

REPENTANCE, one of the primary conditions of salvation, is always preceded, and accompanied by that exercise of the mind which we call CONVICTION OF SIN. However numerous and dark may have been our offences against God, we have little disposition to cherish contrition on their account, until by some means, we are impressed with their criminality, and the miseries they are likely to bring upon us. We are never sorry, or repent for a thing, the evil of which we do not see. *Conviction of sin is therefore, the state of being sensible of guilt.* Where this does not exist, there can be no repentance. But are not all persons more or less sensible of guilt? I presume they are. Who is there in this Christian land, who has not been the subject of conviction of sin? When alarming providences have overtaken you; when stirring appeals have been addressed to your conscience; and when death has come near and menaced your life; you have felt fearful forebodings, and shuddered to think of the evils that might be concealed in the dark folds of the future. You may have uttered no word of apprehension. Your emotions may have been known only to yourself. But in all this was there no conviction of sin? Conviction to this extent is, I presume, common among men. But many have gone yet further, who have not renounced their sins. You have entertained, it may be, some tolerably just conceptions of the law of God; of the holiness and justice of him who is your final judge; of your utter want of any adequate preparation to appear at his tribunal in the last day; and of your obliga-

tions to our Lord Jesus Christ for his great sacrifice in behalf of sinners. In moments of pain produced by the review, you may have wept bitter tears over your sins; and earnestly prayed for pardon, and deliverance! All this, and more, you may have deeply felt; but probably have succeeded in suppressing its influence, and in ultimately, becoming wholly fearless and indifferent. Convictions in every degree of intensity, are not unusual with multitudes, who never repent of their sins.

Conviction of sin, I further observe, is modified in its influence upon different minds, by a variety of circumstances. The constitutional temperament, the moral habits, the condition of things which surround us, and the amount of knowledge we possess on the subject of religion, all have their influence. Those generally, suffer most agonizingly from conviction, who are most excitable; who have never before enjoyed, or who have wickedly neglected, or abused, the means of grace; or who are in the midst of exciting religious scenes. With such, conviction is often sudden, and attended with overwhelming shame, and horror. Others of calm feeling, or who have attended all their life upon the means of grace, and are extensively instructed, suffer much less painfully. Such diversities must, from the differences in the human mind, always obtain. But when conviction is permanent and effectual, it is ever attended with the same results. It produces deep humility; it brings with it trembling fears of destruction, and wrath; it creates a self-loathing, and abhorrence of our sins; and it impresses us with a strong distrust of our own wisdom, and strength. Let no Christian therefore distress himself because his convictions may have differed in their circumstances, and *apparent* intensity, from those of others. You may have suffered much from conviction. It is well. But what if you have felt less? If the desired results have followed, it is equally well. Will you refuse to believe yourself impressed religiously, because you have not

been stricken down, like Saul of Tarsus, by a light from heaven; or as was the ardent Benjamite, arrested by a voice from the skies? Are such miracles yet necessary? Remember that there is, as Elijah found to be true, often more of God in the "still small voice," than in the "earthquake," the "fire," or the desolating "whirlwind."

I have stated however, that conviction of sin, no matter how deep and painful, may be, and often is, resisted, and finally banished from the soul. How melancholy, how deplorable, is this fact! Pride, or shame, or prejudice, or the influence of friends, or the ridicule of associates, or "the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things," or the neglect of the means of grace, or the removal voluntarily, or of necessity, from the circles of religious influence, and privilege, any, or all these, may rise up, gain the ascendency, and lead you, fatally away, into the toils of hopeless perdition! But there is another class of evil influences not less dangerous than these. The anxieties of conviction create strong desires for instruction in regard to the way of salvation, and secure your attention to almost any plausible theory of recovery to the divine favor. Contending sectaries avail themselves of this crisis in your history, to pour into your ears their favorite dogmas. You are by such means, in great danger of being turned aside from the word of God, the only sure and safe guide. Your mind easily becomes confused, and your judgment misled. From the labyrinth in which you may be so involved, you perhaps cannot escape, and you soon, either give up the subject altogether, or mistaking conviction for the whole of religion, join some Church, and thus arrested in your progress, never come to Christ, from whom alone you can obtain pardon, and eternal life! Alas, how many are there— not a few within the compass of my own knowledge—who *were* deeply, agonizingly, convicted of sin, but who *now*, by the agency of some such causes as these, are further from God, and more hard, and

careless, than ever before! They have perhaps, rashly concluded that religion is but a dream of the fancy; they have abandoned it; and they are no more seen in the house of God! Or they are persuaded that, after all, they are not so corrupt and wicked as they had supposed! Or they have settled down heartless church members, of questionable morals, bigoted spirit, and whose zeal is inspired only by the bitterness of litigation, and soulless controversy.

But cannot these fearful consequences be avoided? May not conviction of sin, of which we have seen nearly all are subjects to a greater or less extent, if the proper instrumentalities are employed, be cherished, and increased, until matured into true evangelical repentance? Thanks to our Heavenly Father, it may; and the means are within our reach, by which this end, with the divine blessing, may be most surely gained.

It is sufficiently plain that if your convictions are maintained, and rendered strong, and effective, the influences so deleterious, and often disastrous, to which we have referred, must be carefully watched and controlled. Your own heart must be subjected to frequent, and faithful examinations. The suggestions of the adversary must be vigilantly guarded, and repelled. Remember that, "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." An attentive and prayerful study of the word of God, must be prosecuted. Thus only, can you be guided by competent knowledge, and escape deception, and error. Vain and irreligious society must be avoided. Serious thought must be sedulously cultivated. Prayer, frequent, and fervent, is of the utmost importance, since its direct tendency is to fix the thoughts strongly, both upon your own depravity and sinfulness, and the satisfaction made by the Redeemer. Thus your desires are increased for pardon, and salvation. To these, and other similar instrumentalities, must be added regular and devotional attendance upon the means of grace, evangelically administered.

In the sanctuary Jehovah is pleased peculiarly to dwell. God, in the fullness of his grace; Jesus Christ in his love and kindness; the Holy Spirit in his sanctifying influences; all the duties, and privileges of religion; as well as the miserable corruption of lost and sinful men: and the way of salvation through a crucified Redeemer: are there constantly held forth before the mind. Each of these instrumentalities is invested with great power. All united, and how potent must they be for good! With the blessing of Almighty God—and remember, they all are his own appointed means to bring men to the knowledge of himself, which he will therefore honor with his favor,—you may confidently anticipate from them, the happiest results.

Such I understand to be the true nature of conviction of sin; the effects which it produces upon the mind; its liability to be resisted and suppressed; and the means by which it is to be cherished, and perfected. I have only to add that deep and thorough conviction of sin, is of the utmost practical importance in the religion of Christ.

I have shown you that conviction of sin does not, by any means, as a matter of course, result in repentance, and faith, and salvation, and yet without it, there is no repentance, or faith, or salvation. A defect here will be apparent in every part of your subsequent Christian life. He who has never seen fully, the depths of depravity, and wickedness, concealed in his own heart, and wept in sorrow over its miserable deceitfulness, and abominable corruptions, can never properly appreciate the grace of redemption by Jesus Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, or feel much exultation in the hope of deliverance from sin. Such a man has inadequate conceptions of the holiness and justice of the divine law; feels but slight sympathy with lost sinners; and has little of the spirit of prayer, or true devotion to the cause of Christ. In a word, if your convictions are slight, your religion must always be superficial. On the other hand, have you seen yourself as

you really are, depraved, criminal, degraded, incapable of any thing good; justly condemned by the law of God, which will not spare the guilty; have you ungratefully, sacrilegiously, turned away from Christ, and trampled profanely, upon his precious blood by which you were redeemed, and refused all your life, to hear his gracious invitations, by which you have been called to repentance? Have all these considerations made their full impression upon your heart? If so, you will not soon forget "the wormwood and the gall" which were mingled in your bitter cup. Like Job, you will abhor yourself, and repent in dust and ashes. Your prayers, and wrestlings, will be no heartless forms. That you may trust in Christ, and be saved by his grace, you will then regard as a priceless boon. Snatched yourself, as by almost a miracle from the jaws of destruction, you are prepared to enter into the feelings of others, and to labor and weep and pray for them. And while you "rejoice with those who do rejoice" in Christ Jesus, your love and gratitude to the Redeemer are a never failing incentive to humility, devotion, and perseverance in "every good word and work." If such have been the developments of conviction of sin, religion with you will be not a mere profession, not a lifeless circle of dull duty, not a fashionable formality, but a happy and glorious "communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."

SECTION II.

WITH REPENTANCE PRAYER IS INVARIABLY ASSOCIATED.

Prayer is natural to man; its nature; impelled by a sense of our danger; its results.

REPENTANCE is associated with *prayer*, no less certainly, and invariably, than it is preceded, and accompanied, by conviction of sin. Religion can no more exist without prayer, than men can move, and act, without animal life.

> "Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
> The Christian's native air;
> His watchword at the gates of death;
> He enters heaven with prayer."

A single moment's thought will convince any one, that *prayer is natural* to man. When alarmed by being thrown into imminent danger, who is there who does not involuntarily call upon God. In such circumstances the veriest atheist will pray. Will a man attempt to save himself when about to fall from an eminence? If in the sea, will he catch at a plank, or a spar, to escape being ingulfed, and drowned? With the same certainty does peril extort from him the earnest appeal to God for deliverance. What is natural to man everywhere, must be natural to him in religion. When convinced that spiritually, he is criminal, and lost, and that Jehovah alone can rescue him, will he not resort instantly, to prayer? And especially as God has instituted, and commanded prayer, with the promise that he will hear, and answer, and save, will not the supplications of the penitent be constant and fervent? They must be; and always in proportion to his sense of danger, and his hope in the mercy of the Most High.

Prayer I may be allowed, in definition to remark, is the offering up to God of the desires of the soul. It always implies on your part, to say the least, a belief in his omnipresence, his power, and his benevolence. To be accepted, it

must be sincere—with desire to receive the blessings asked it must be offered in faith—believing that God will hear, and answer; and it must be presented in the name, and through the merits of Christ Jesus our Lord. Such prayer God has enjoined upon all men, and encouraged by the assurance that he will answer, and supply all your wants.

The cold speculative philosopher may tell you that God has determined long ago, precisely what, in every case, he will do, and that it is presumption and folly, to think that by your prayers you can change his purposes. And the equally cold and lifeless Christian may suggest that, since he is infinitely wise and good, he will bestow every blessing which your interests and happiness may require, and as certainly without as with your asking. You do not turn aside to hear such sublimated theology. You very well know that these arguments against prayer, are equally conclusive against all human effort in religion. Why preach, why instruct, why do any thing, if the same results are to occur without as with these instrumentalities? Why has God commanded us to pray? He is indeed, immutable, and blessed be his name, it is a part of his unchangeable design to hear and answer those who "with pure hearts fervently call upon him." He is infinitely wise and good, and his word has already taught you that it is agreeable to both his wisdom and goodness to grant to your prayers for yourself, and for others, blessings which did you never ask, he would never bestow.

The heart of the repenting sinner is trembling with anxiety. His soul is overwhelmed with a sense of helplessness. Will metaphysical abstractions dry up the fountain of his supplications? God forbid. The plan of divine mercy embraces the prayers of his people, because they are a continual acknowledgment of sins; a declaration of our dependence upon him; an expression of our trust; and a confession of our hope in his mercy through Jesus Christ our Lord. Were

you not permitted to pray, how miserable would be your condition! What power could save you from despair? God has invited you to pray. With repentance prayer is invariably associated. You must pray; you will pray; and God will hear, and bless, and give you a glorious deliverance.

SECTIO[illegible]

TO A PERSONAL UNION [illegible]RD JESUS CHRIST, REPENTANCE O[illegible]Y CONDITION.

Nature of repent[illegible] [illegible]volves, of ourselves, and of God; the principles up[illegible] [illegible]pardon and acceptance; the tests by which evangelical r[illegible] [illegible]ed: the duty of all men to repent; repentance must continue [illegible]ercised while we remain imperfect.

Repentance is indispensable to a personal union with Christ. Without it you can never receive the benefits of his great satisfaction. Repentance is therefore, necessary to the salvation of sinners. "I am come," said the Redeemer, "to call sinners to repentance."* And he adds, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."† In harmony with these declarations of Messiah, the apostles proclaimed to the world that, "Now God commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent."‡ Repentance, or perdition, is the alternative. The one or the other is inevitable. Do you desire to escape destruction, and to obtain eternal life? You must then, know the meaning of repentance, not as a matter of theory merely, but practically, and experimentally. How infinitely moment-

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* Matt. ix. 13. † Luke xiii. 3. ‡ Acts xvii. 30.

ous therefore, is the subject now before us! Let it with carefulness, and prayer, be examined.

What is the *nature* of true repentance of sin?

This is our first inquiry. As conviction of sin, I answer, is the state of being *sensible* of guilt, so repentance *is sorrow for any error* we may have committed.* In its *ordinary* acceptation it describes the pain, or grief, which arises from the discovery that our conduct has brought injury upon ourselves or others. In *religion* repentance represents the soul as recollecting itself, and with deep sorrow, and strong desires for amendment, reviewing its own dispositions and actions.† It pervades, and gives character to the whole of that change in y[illegible] affections, and conduct, by which you pass from [illegible] race, wrought by the word, and spirit of God. [illegible] as defiling and endangering the soul, associate[illegible] hension of the mercy of God in Christ, com[illegible] ith grief and hatred of your depravity, [illegible] ansgressions, and you turn from them to the [illegible] ce of God. A change in the dispositions of your mind such as repentance brings, must produce a corresponding change in your habits of thought and action. True evangelical repentance therefore, includes in its nature, both sorrow for sin, and reformation of life. It is "repentance *towards God*,"‡ because through its influence we turn to him; it is "repentance *unto life*,"§ since it leads directly to its possession in all its spiritual excellence; and it is "repentance *unto salvation*," inasmuch as it always results in everlasting deliverance. From first to last it is among the most prominent, and striking features in the religion of Christ.

What, we next inquire, is the character of *the knowledge* involved in repentance?

If we have stated its nature correctly, it can evidently

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* μεταμελομαι.

† μετανοια.

‡ Acts xx. 21.

§ Acts xi. 18.

never take place without some just conceptions both of yourself as a sinner, and of Jehovah as a just God, and at the same time a merciful and gracious Saviour.

Repentance is predicated in the first place, upon *a knowledge of yourself as a sinner;* in other words, as we have said, upon conviction of sin. Not until they had a painful consciousness of their criminality did the people on the memorable day of pentecost, with anguished hearts, cry out, "Men, and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."* When such *consciousness of guilt* exists, and not until then, will you *repent* of *your* sins. Most men do not hesitate to confess themselves sinners. But is the fact painful to them? Do they not at the same time, think that they are really, about as good as could reasonably be expected? They conceive that the *law* of God which they have so often, and so flagrantly violated, is designed rather as a standard of excellence, than as a rule of duty. Its demands appear to them, in any other light, inconsistent, since they are manifestly above the ability of beings so frail as men. They are, they tell us, always sorry for every wrong action, and they imagine that beyond this, very little ought to be required. To visit upon offenders the penalties of the law with severe strictness, would amount in their opinion, to an injustice which the mercy of Jehovah will never allow. What correct knowledge have those who cherish sentiments like these, either of themselves as sinners, or of Christ as a Saviour? Will they, can they, ever repent? Never until better informed of the true nature of their relations with the God of the universe. Their conceptions of the divine law are too low, and unworthy, and their self complacency conceals,

* Acts ii. 37, 38.

even from themselves, their corruptions, and their abominable offences.

Repentance, I have said, embraces with sorrow for sin, an amendment of life. But there may be both sorrow for sin, or rather for the *consequences* of sin, and amendment of life in some sort, in cases in which there is no true evangelical repentance! But how is this? These results may be produced by various causes other than those which are religious. The sense of degradation which immorality leaves upon the mind; or the injury it inflicts upon your reputation, or worldly interests; but above all, the fear of ultimate punishment; these, and other like considerations, often lead to bitter regrets, deep sorrow, and extensive reformations. Age also generally brings with it exemption from the temptations of earlier years, more calmness of feeling, and consequent outward morality. Ill health, and adversities of various kinds, are often attended with similar consequences. What however, is there in all this of evangelical repentance? No abhorrence of sin as sin, has arisen in the bosom; no desire for holiness; no love to God; nothing which really belongs to true contrition. What benefits does such repentance give? The moral interests of society are advanced, as they must always be, by the good conduct of its members, whatever may be the sources of its origin. But if it has been induced by no higher influences than these, it is too feeble to reach beyond the precincts of the present life. Men may seek to justify themselves on the plea of their integrity, and uprightness, and they may rely upon the reformations that have arisen from mere worldly causes, but true repentance will instantly sweep away all these refuges, as the storm carries before it autumn's withered leaves, and the soul will bow down before God under a sense of miserable corruption, and utter unworthiness. The self-condemned publican in the parable, was only an ordinary example of the true penitent. He knew that he had done nothing good;

he was conscious of deep depravity of heart; his offences stood in fearful array before him; and in his confusion, and grief, and shame, "He would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me, a sinner." Such knowledge of *yourself* is necessary to true repentance.

But information respecting yourself is not enough. You must, secondly, if you repent, comprehend something of God. What must you know of him? You will probably, be first impressed with the infinite purity, and holiness of his character. There were those to whom he once said:—"Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself."* Are not such ideas, though wholly absurd, still entertained by many? Those who so think of God, have no such knowledge as will lead them to repentance. How different were the conceptions of the honored Lawgiver of Israel! He exclaimed, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders!"† Is this the light in which you regard the great Eternal? If so a solemn awe, and reverence will instantly spring up in your bosom. If mingled with fears of punishment, these emotions will bring terror and alarm. Are they associated with love in your heart? They will then find expression in adoration. But your attention will at once revert to the moral contrast between God and yourself. This will instantly create such a sense of your unworthiness, as will extort from you the cry, "I am a sinful man, O Lord." "O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day." A painful consciousness takes possession of your soul—it cannot be repressed—that if God shall refuse to hear your prayers, and you shall meet ultimate condemnation, it will be no more than the strict demerit of your multiplied offences.

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* Psalm l. 21. † Ex. xv. 11.

With an accurate knowledge of the purity and holiness of God, the true penitent has some proper apprehension of his *mercy*. This may be a mere impression that *God is* merciful, without any distinct knowledge of the medium through which that mercy may be exercised towards you. Since however, there can be no sustaining confidence in his mercy not derived from the revelation of his purpose to forgive sins, and since no such purpose exists but through the sacrifice and mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ, repentance must have reference always, to God as seen in the satisfaction made by our blessed Redeemer. For "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."* But it is a just appreciation of the *love* of God, especially in giving his Son to die for us, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," that effectually breaks, and subdues the heart of the sinner. In Jesus Christ is revealed at the same time, the exceeding turpitude of sin, the unbending justice of the Father, and his readiness through his Son, to receive, to forgive, and to save you. When once these glorious truths have taken full possession of the mind, it is no more the threatenings of the divine law, nor the fear of punishment, nor a vague hope of escaping his wrath, that moves you to action. Your eyes are fixed immovably, upon the *love* of God, as seen in the cross of the Redeemer! It is the cross which fills your heart with sorrow for sin, and brings you to his feet in humble submission, and obedience! The language of your soul is: —

> "Nay, but I yield, I yield,
> I can hold out no more:
> I sink, by dying love compelled,
> And own thee conqueror."

These are the conceptions of yourself as a sinner, and of God as a Saviour, which you now entertain. We will next

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* 2 Cor. v. 19.

proceed to inquire into the principles, upon which repentance results in your pardon, and acceptance, with God.

How after all, can you be approved? Your own character as a sinner is such, that his immaculate purity forbids him, as you very well know, "to look upon *you* with allowance." The law, which cannot spare the guilty, has already pronounced your condemnation, and the law must be satisfied. God is merciful. Yet you do not feel that you deserve his mercy. Jesus [illegible] sinners. But what part have you in [illegible] the word of God holds out numerous promises to the penitent. But you dare not appropriate them to yourself. You do not question their applicability to others. But to so unworthy a sinner as you are, they, you conceive, cannot refer. You imagine yourself [illegible] these considerations, and many others [illegible] conditions of repentance upon your soul. You are vacillating between hope and despair. Nor do you ever really embrace by faith, the promised salvation, until you perceive how your own pardon [illegible] and glory of God, are [illegible] equally and alike secured in the satisfaction of Jesus Christ our Lord. The moment you [illegible] Jesus Christ, the Father accepts you. *In* Christ you find that the holiness and justice of God, [illegible] of Christ, required your condemnation, [illegible] your justification, and eternal life. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life."* All the attributes of God are now pledged, not to destroy you, but for your deliverance and glory. Is this great truth fully comprehended by you? Can you say from your heart, "Lord, I do believe. Help thou mine unbelief."† Then no shipwrecked mariner shrouded in darkness, and foundering amidst contending tempests, ever

* John iii. 36. † Mark ix. 24.

hailed with more heartfelt joy the dawn of day, than you do this discovery of divine grace. The emotion which pervades your heart is not joy merely, it is wonder, and gratitude, and love. And while your soul cherishes a consciousness of safety in Christ, your bosom is filled with the purpose of living every remaining day and hour of your existence to "the glory of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." You now see that you are pardoned, and accepted alone for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose redemption is the most glorious of all assurances that God is ready to receive every returning penitent; that every command to repent and forsake your sins, is an additional testimony that your feeble attempts to obey will not prove a hopeless task; and that every instance of remission of sins left on record, is intended to show that "there is forgiveness with him that he may be feared." Thus is the mystery practically solved, how "God can be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

But there are *tests* by which the evangelical qualities of your repentance, as well as all the other characteristics of your religion, *must be tried.* Until the trial comes all professors of religion stand on equal ground. You have learned something of yourself and of God, of sin and of the Redeemer. You have abandoned self-complacency, and felt that disapprobation of your own moral character and conduct, which has led you to confess with shame and sorrow your inexcusable guilt. You have acquired such a knowledge of the mercy of God in Jesus Christ as has brought you back to our heavenly Father, and prepared you believingly to embrace the precious promises which have filled your soul with gratitude for his favor, and with strong desire to honor and glorify him in all things. Thus far all *appears* well. But the whole work is not yet done. Very far from it. You are a soldier of Christ; you have enlisted under his banner; but your spirit, firmness, and bravery have not

yet been tested. Will your religion stand, or will it be consumed by the searching ordeal to which it will most surely be subjected? "Beloved," said an apostle, "think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing had happened unto you, but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."* Your trial, if it approximates "Christ's sufferings," if it is "fiery," must be severe. O should it prove you destitute of divine grace, how melancholy, how fearful the state of things it will reveal! But should you be found true; true always, true everywhere, and true to the last; the consequences will be most happy. Your advance will be like the eagle's,

> "Proudly careering his course of joy;
> Firm on his own mountain vigor relying,
> Breasting the dark storm, the red bolt defying,
> His wing on the wind, and his eye on the sun,
> He swerves not a hair, but bears onward, right on."

Repentance always brings with it irreconcilable aversion to sin. Thus much its very nature implies. In this particular you must be tried. Do you cordially hate all sin? Or do you yet feel a lingering love for old follies, and once repudiated transgressions, and do you involuntarily, make apologies to yourself for their occasional indulgence? Can you possibly, have known the nature, and criminality, and felt the misery of sin, and not loathe it in your soul? If so *you* yet have to do the work of repentance. If you do not hate sin, no matter what may have been your conflicts with the adversary, your hopes of eternal life, your sorrows, or your joys, all is delusion! You have no true repentance.

Hatred to sin must necessarily lead to the forsaking of sin. Here is another test of the genuineness of your repentance. The *works of the flesh*—"adultery, fornication,

* 1 Peter iv. 12, 13.

lasciviousness, hatred, variance, wrath, strife, envyings, drunkenness, revellings, avarice, covetousness"*—all, all will be forsaken. And *the fruits of the Spirit* will be cultivated—"love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance." "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts," and "live in the Spirit," and "walk in the Spirit" of God. Salvation includes deliverance from sin. And is such deliverance possible while you do not forsake sin? Where sin is not forsaken, there is no true repentance.

Your readiness to *confess* your transgressions, whether committed against God or men, is *another test* to which your repentance must be subjected. "He that covereth his sins," says Jehovah, "shall not prosper; but whoso *confesseth*, and forsaketh them, shall have mercy."† Readily, ingenuously, freely will you confess them all. Not those only which have been outward, and have attracted the gaze of the world, but those also, that have ever been deeply concealed in your heart. Have your offences been against God only? With unaffected humility, you will pour out before him your confessions. Have they been against men? The moment opportunity offers you will make to them a frank acknowledgment, and earnestly seek their pardon. Can you truly repent and not be sorry for the injuries you have done to your fellow-men? Can you sincerely lament such injuries, and proudly refuse to confess them? Impossible! Repentance that "hath not this extent," is too feeble, and lifeless to be of any essential value in the religion of Christ.

Your repentance will be tried by another test. If it is true you will evince it by *restoring* to any you may have injured, as far as may be in your power, *all* of which you may have unjustly deprived them. He was a sincere penitent who said to the Redeemer:—"If I have taken any

* Gal. v. 19-26. † Prov. xxviii. 3.

thing from any man, by false accusation, I restore him four fold." And the response of the blessed Jesus to Zaccheus was, "This day is salvation come to this house."* Whether the parties injured be now rich or poor, honorable or obscure, wise or ignorant; whether your offences have been against their property, their reputation, or any other interest; is not material. You will as far as practicable, make them ample reparation. This may be a severe test, but it must be applied, and your repentance if evangelical, will survive it gloriously. If it does not, you fail in the trial, and prove that you have not yielded to the claims of religion. See you those who by your means have been precipitated into poverty, or into disgrace, or into domestic or social miseries, writhing under your unrepaired wrongs? Are you unmoved? "Doth not God require of you to do justly?" Do you meditate no effort to relieve, and restore to them their just rights? All this, and you claim to have repented, and been united to Christ by a living faith! You talk of going to heaven! Vain hope! "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."†

The last test I shall mention, by which your repentance will be tried, is the forgiving of the injuries which others may inflict upon you. "If ye forgive not men their trespasses," said the blessed Redeemer, "neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses."‡ "If any man have a quarrel against any"—so taught an apostle—"even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."§ Heard you that prayer, solemn, devout, impressive, which the Saviour uttered with his dying breath? And for whom? For his cruel persecutors, and murderers, whose garments were

* Luke xix. 8, 9.
† Gal. vi. 7, 8.
‡ Matt. vi. 15.
§ Col. iii. 13.

reeking with his blood; the men who nailed him to the cross! "Father, forgive them. They know not what they do." So he endured the injuries of vile men, and so he forgave them. If you have true repentance you will forgive all offences and injuries. Implacability, hatred, malice towards any one, cherished and kept in the heart, is incompatible with true religion. In our daily prayers to God, the Saviour instructs us to say:—"Forgive *us* our trespasses *as we* forgive those who trespass against us." Forgiveness must be extended, if you would rationally hope to be forgiven.

These are some of the principal tests by which the genuineness, sincerity, and permanence of your repentance must be tried—your hatred, and abandonment of sin; your willingness to confess your offences against God, and against man; your redress of all injuries inflicted upon others; and your forgiveness of every one who has trespassed against you. That only which sustains all these tests, is true repentance, and will so be found in the last day.

Is it, I now ask, the duty of every one to possess and to exercise, such repentance as I have attempted to describe, and illustrate.

That it is, Paul distinctly taught the statesmen and philosophers of classic Athens. "The times of this ignorance God winked at," said he to the Areopagus, "but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." Did God *then* command *all* men, everywhere, to repent? So consequently, he does *now*. It is therefore your duty to repent, and to repent without delay. Are you under obligation to obey God at all? If so, it is evident, since he commands it, that you are obliged to possess, and to exercise, true heartfelt repentance. Many I know, object to this conclusion. How they ask, can we repent? Repentance is the gift of God, and we must of course, wait until he please to bestow it upon us. But God commands immediate repentance, and

therefore, the pretence urged by many, of waiting God's time, is a miserable essay to palliate the guilt of religious inaction, and to conceal from themselves if possible, the crime of their hardness and impenitency of heart. *They* waiting *God's* time! Preposterous! *Messiah* commenced *his* ministry by inculcating upon all men, the duty of repentance. His language addressed to the multitude is most emphatic:—"Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand."* The risen Saviour enjoined upon his apostles, and ministers, "That repentance should be preached in his name, among all nations."† And "they went forth and preached that men should repent."‡ Their admonitions everywhere repeated, were, "Repent ye and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."§ The word of God then teaches that it is the duty of sinners to repent. Who dare intimate that it is not their duty? Do you question their ability in the premises? Men can choose to remain impenitent. This fact no one doubts. But the power of choice implies the power of an opposite choice. Therefore men can choose to repent. They are also under infinite obligations to repent, not only for flagitious transgressions, but for all sin, because sin is unreasonable; because it brings upon you present and eternal misery; because its influence and example are ruinous to those around you; because you ought to be sorry for every wrong, endeavor to repair it, and never repeat it; because God's law which requires it, is holy, just, and good, and never calls upon you to do any thing which is not your duty, right in itself, and for your own advantage; and because a penitent disposition is so identified with a gracious state, that without it you can have no spiritual union with Christ; but especially because Jesus Christ is for you, "Exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and the forgiveness of sins."‖ Does repentance appear to

* Matt. iv. 17. † Luke xxiv. 47. ‡ Mark vi. 12.
§ Acts iii. 19. ‖ Acts v. 31.

you important, and have you yet failed to comply with the divine injunction? These are merciful admonitions of the Spirit of God himself. Be not deaf I entreat you, to his heavenly counsels. Do you ask what means you shall employ to seek repentance? Yield your life to the divine guidance as indicated in the word of truth. Consider your ways. Contemplate your sins, your ingratitude, your danger. Pray earnestly, and perseveringly. Meditate upon the goodness, and promises of God. Break off your sins by righteousness. In a word, use all the means of grace, and God's blessing will be with you. He will give you true repentance.

I have now submitted what I understand to be the nature of repentance of sin; the knowledge it involves of yourself as a sinner, and of God as a Saviour: the principles upon which it results in your pardon and acceptance; the tests by which the sincerity of your repentance will be tried; and the duty of all men now to repent. I have only further to remark, that repentance does not cease when you become united with Christ, and put on the habiliments of the Christian profession. Even the most devoted Christians are, while they continue upon earth, exceedingly imperfect, and consequently perpetually liable to fall into errors, and sins. When does the true disciple commit transgressions without being overtaken by most painful convictions of sin? The sorrows of repentance surely follow, and like Peter, over his offences he weeps bitterly. Not until you reach that land where there is no sin, will you find yourself beyond the precincts of repentance. In youth and in age, in prosperity and in adversity, in sickness and in health, until you arrive at ultimate perfection, repentance must be your companion everywhere, and in all circumstances.

> "E'en the rapture of pardon is mingled with fears,
> And the cup of thanksgiving with penitent tears."

SECTION IV.

FAITH IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IS AN UNALTERABLE CONDITION OF SUCH A PERSONAL UNION WITH HIM, AS WILL SECURE THE SALVATION OF SINNERS.

Importance of faith; its nature; what we are required to believe; sense in which the Gospel must be understood; duty of every man to believe; effects of true faith.

FAITH in the Lord Jesus Christ, no less than repentance towards God, is an unalterable condition of such a personal union with him, as will secure the salvation of sinners. "Without faith it is impossible to please him."* But "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."† Faith is eminently the instrumentality by which you receive Christ, and enjoy the benefits of his infinite satisfaction. By faith you come to Christ: by faith you live in Christ; and by faith you walk in all the commandments and ordinances of Christ. Christ dwells in your heart by faith. By faith your cordial approbation of the terms of pardon through him is called forth: your grateful consent is given to whatever he demands: and by faith you embrace him fully, in his entire character, as "made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."‡ Thus distinguished is the position which faith occupies in your rescue from sin, and attainment of happiness. Without it we can have no such union with Messiah as will make us "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

If faith be thus momentous in its character, and results, how deep should be the interest with which you should inquire into its nature! What is faith? It is simply the assent of the mind to the truth of any proposition. If the proposition be religious, your faith is religious. Faith always

* Heb. xi. 5, 6. † Acts xvi. 31. ‡ 1 Cor. i. 30.

partakes of the same character with its subject. From this definition it will be seen that faith is not, as has been sometimes imagined, an inward principle implanted in the soul, irrespective of truth communicated. Neither is it a series of religious actions, nor a disposition of the heart. These are its accompaniments, and results. But faith itself, is the full assent of the mind, with the cheerful reception and approbation of the heart, of all that is contained in the revelation of God. It is predicated necessarily, upon an *adequate knowledge* of divine truth, and must *rest upon such an understanding* of what Jehovah has been pleased to make known, as is not subversive of its true influence, and design. Faith, considered as a mere mental exercise, without regard to the object upon which it terminates, and its influence over our heart and life, is a matter of small moment, since intellectually, it is the same whether it refer to things temporal, or spiritual. The *object* mainly, gives to faith its character, and direction. If therefore, "faith saves us," it is not that it possesses saving merit in itself, but because it embraces a saving object. *The means* of its production are most simple, since we really believe, in religion as well as in every other department of life, whatever we regard as true, and irrespective of the appliances by which the conviction of its truth has been impressed. Some proposition must be submitted in order that faith may exist, since where there is no divine declaration, or promise, there can be no faith because there is nothing to believe. So in cases where there is no divine command, there can be no obedience, because there is nothing required. Your faith may be elicited by the nature of the proposition itself; or it may arise from your confidence in the veracity of the speaker, or writer by whom it is made known; or it may be called forth by the force of such testimony in its support as in your judgment is conclusive. The means by which it is created may be various. This however, in no respect affects its character. Faith also, inva-

riably *produces a marked result*, wherever it exists. You cannot believe that a man intends to injure you, without putting yourself on your guard against his designs, nor that he purposes to do you a favor without feeling towards him a peculiar kindness. Action is the test of faith, since "faith without works is dead, being alone." Where there is no action there is no faith.

Such I understand to be the nature, in general terms, of true faith, and I am well assured that it never can be wanting in any of those attributes necessary to render it vigorous and effectual. There is, you perceive, nothing in it particularly mysterious, or difficult to be understood. It may be readily illustrated by the occurrences of every-day life. The principle is the same with that on which you conduct all your concerns. You have, for instance, at stake in one of our courts of justice, your life, your fortune, or your "sacred honor." Probably all of these are suspended upon the issue, and will be preserved, or lost, according to the belief of a jury of your peers, in the truth of the testimony to be brought up for, or against you. So all your interests for eternity must be decided before the tribunal of God, who knows all things, and who has declared that, although in yourself you are a sinner, yet if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you shall inherit eternal glory. In your business transactions, and when thousands are involved, you receive, and cheerfully credit, the promise to pay of your friend. Knowing his honor, his integrity, and his ability, you do not doubt that the result will justify your faith in him. *We* also "know whom *we* have believed, and are persuaded that he is able to keep that which we have committed unto him against that day."* What would be the condition of things in social life, did we not believe on sufficient testimony, the constantly recurring statements, and promises of each other? "If we receive the

* 2 Tim. i. 12.

witness of men, the witness of God is greater."* And "he that hath received his testimony, hath set to his seal that God is true."† "He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."‡ Is this true? Do you give it *credit?* And what is such *credit*, or *faith*, but a firm *trust in the promises* of life and salvation through Christ? But can he be said to *trust, to credit, to believe* the promises, who does not receive and act upon them? David addressing Jehovah said,—"They that know thy name *will* put their trust in thee."§ Can you know Jesus Christ, and give credit to the declaration that "he will save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him," unless you know, and believe his word, which assures you of his ability, and disposition as a Saviour? Do you believe in him? Then with a true and firm reliance, you will "worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.‖ Through such faith you are brought into *immediate connection* with the salvation purchased by the Redeemer." In him believing, though now you see him not, it is your privilege to "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

I next inquire what, more particularly, it is which, in order to your union with Christ, you are called upon to believe.

Is it any thing incredible in itself, abstruse in its nature, or requiring unusual ability, or penetration, to comprehend? Far from it. It is *simply the Gospel.* "Go ye," said Messiah to his apostles, "into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature; he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved." He that *believeth?* He that believeth *what?* He that believeth, of course, *that which* it was made their duty to preach—*the Gospel.* It is the Gospel there-

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* 1 John v. 9.
† John iii. 33.
‡ John v. 10.
§ Ps. ix. 10.
‖ Phil. iii. 3.

fore, which you are called upon to believe. But *what is the Gospel?* This inquiry is unspeakably momentous. I shall therefore, in my answer, not lay before you my *opinion*, nor even use my own *words*, but shall employ the words of God himself. "The Gospel,—which I preached unto you, which ye have received, and wherein ye stand, by which also are ye saved"—is, "that *Christ died for our sins* according to the scriptures, and that he was *buried*, and that he *rose again* the third day, according to the Scriptures."* "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."† "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."‡ "We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness, but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."§ "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead, and that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again." "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things have passed away, behold all things have become new." "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us unto himself by Jesus Christ." "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."‖

Such is a summary of the Gospel of Christ, in which, although not every truth necessary to be believed is enumerated, yet it embraces all the essential principles that concern your salvation. It is *the very Gospel*, and in the same words, which "first began to be spoken by the Lord himself, and

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* 1 Cor. xv. 1–5.
† John iii. 16.
‡ 1 Tim. i. 15.
§ 1 Cor. i. 23.
‖ 2 Cor. v. 14–21.

was afterwards confirmed unto us by *them* that heard *him*, God also bearing them witness with signs, and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost."

But if, you perhaps allege, such be the Gospel of Christ, then, nearly *every man* believes it. What, not believe the simple Gospel! He who does not must be a stupid infidel. Pause, my dear friend. Do not deceive yourself. No man believes the Gospel who does *not understand* the Gospel; who mistakes its true import; who connects with it any thing *subversive* of its true import; or subtracts from it any of its essential principles. Do you understand the Gospel? You have perhaps, a general belief that what is called the Gospel is true, but you know very little, and probably care very little about it. The whole subject is in your mind, vague and indefinite. How then *can* you believe it? You cannot. Do you *mistake* the true import of the Gospel? If so, your faith is as futile as was that of certain Jews who believed that Jesus was the Messiah, but expected that he would reign literally upon the throne of his father David. They therefore, designed "to take him by force to make him a king." Or it may be that like certain men who came down from Judea to Antioch, and preached that the Gentiles that believed, could not be saved unless they were circumcised, and kept the law of Moses, so *you* connect with the Gospel superstitions, and doctrines of men, or omit from it great principles, and thus wholly subvert its true import. You have adopted, it may be, a system which you *suppose* to be the Gospel. You believe it unwaveringly, and defend it with learning, and ability. But after all, is it *the Gospel* you believe? The sincerity with which you suppose it so, does not make it so, either to you, or to any one else. Do you not know that a man may be just as sincere, as firm, and it may even be, as conscientious in believing a falsehood, as in believing the truth? You believe *your own perverted opinions* of the Gospel. Call you this believing

the *Gospel?* You are required not to rest your faith upon erroneous conceptions of your own, or of others, high or low, learned or unlearned, but to believe *the Gospel.*

But what *is the import* of the Gospel? In *what sense* must you understand it, in order that yours may be the true faith? It is most evident that you must understand its great principles in the same sense with the inspired teachers who have transmitted to us the holy record. For illustration, I bring you a message; you hear it; but you place upon it a construction different from the sense I intend to convey. You believe it fully, in your own interpretation of it, but that sense is erroneous. Do you believe my message? Surely not. The Gospel message also, you must understand in the sense intended by those who delivered it—the evangelists and apostles—or it never can be truly said that you believe the Gospel. The import is briefly, that God our sovereign and judge is holy, and that we his creatures are unholy; that our sins against him have been deliberate, intentional, and without excuse; and that we are in consequence, justly exposed to eternal death; that his mercy towards us, and which originated solely in himself, required for the due honor of his government, to be exercised through the sacrifice of his beloved Son; that with his satisfaction the Father is well pleased, and can now, consistently with all his perfections, pardon and accept every sinner, who truly repents, and believes in our Lord Jesus Christ. But let us upon this topic, descend to somewhat more of particularity.

The Gospel teaches that by nature you are depraved, corrupt, sinful, lost, and incapable of doing any thing spiritually good? Do you believe this? Do you not hesitate, and doubt whether you are altogether as guilty, and helpless, as you are represented? Is your condition really, as fearfully dangerous as it is described in the Gospel? Is not the picture a little too dark? Do you not find rising up in

your soul, the desire for a salvation less humiliating; one in which you may be recognized as co-operating meritoriously, with God in your deliverance? Do you not revolt in your secret heart, against the Gospel, when you find that it makes no account of your difference in character from the low and the vile? The Gospel meets all your *wants*, but not one of your prejudices, your proud thoughts, your vicious desires. All these must be abandoned, sacrificed, nailed to the cross, and the soul must cast itself, guilty, and hopeless, into the arms of sovereign mercy. Do you thus understand and believe the Gospel?

The Gospel also teaches its own intrinsic excellency, and adaptedness to the condition and wants of fallen men. It develops a scheme of salvation full of God, worthy of the divine benevolence, and gloriously illustrative of his infinite justice, goodness, and grace. It is in all respects, sufficient and free for the vilest offenders. Do you understand the Gospel, and believe it in this sense? If otherwise, and you are adding to it, or taking from it, to make it in your opinion, more perfect, you do not understand, you do not believe the Gospel. You think it to be, not what it really is, and consequently, you have no true faith.

The Gospel *further* teaches that it is itself "good tidings of great joy." It moves not the intellect alone, but also the affections of the heart. "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." "Believing in Christ is not the exercise of a mind at ease, casting up the evidences for and against, and then coldly assenting, as in a question of science, to that side which seems to have the preponderance of proof." To one whose soul is subdued to "the obedience of faith," there is indeed, no want of satisfactory evidence of any kind, in support of the Gospel, but he feels himself impelled to receive it, not alone on this account, but especially because of its intrinsic merits, fraught as it is with an interest deep as life itself. It is with him, no topic for unfeeling speculation

It brings with it the "hope set before us," upon which he lays hold, because he feels that he is "ready to perish." He is "sinking in deep waters," and this is his only prospect of rescue from death. He is a captive in the chains of sin, and here alone he finds the possibility of release. He is a condemned culprit, and it announces to him—O how graciously!—a free and full pardon. If the *good news* of salvation be not in this manner believed and embraced, it matters very little what speculative notions you may entertain. It is nothing to you, and will result in nothing, since where there is no renunciation of self, there is no reliance upon Christ, and where no special trust in him is cherished, the Gospel brings to the soul no spiritual blessings, no salvation.

To believe the Gospel effectively, or in its true import, we must, as you now see, believe it in the sense in which it was understood by the evangelists and apostles. "He that received seed into the good ground," said our Saviour, explaining in the parable of the sower, the effects of the Gospel upon the hearts of men, "is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it, who also bringeth forth fruit." But can the word be properly heard, and understood, and especially, can it bring forth its legitimate fruit, when its account of the moral character, and condition of man is not appreciated; when its adaptedness to the spiritual wants of the fallen and miserable, is not seen, and its revelations of infinite grace, are not comprehended, embraced, and loved? All this is essential to such faith as secures our union with Jesus Christ our Lord. He who so believes has "like precious faith" with the apostles and primitive Christians.

In passing I think proper to refer to the truth that *it is the duty of all men to believe the Gospel*, and be saved. I shall not stop to elaborate the argument, but will simply say, that all men are under obligation to believe, because the Gospel is true, and it is their duty to believe the truth; because the word of God in both the Old Testament and

the New, imperatively commands all men to believe—"It is the commandment of God," says John, "that they should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ"*—and when he commands, it is the duty of all men to obey; because unbelief is held forth in the Scriptures to be a sin of the most heinous character—"He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God"†—but it is no sin not to do any thing which is not our duty; and because God has denounced his wrath against all unbelievers—"He that believeth not shall be damned."‡ Is it objected that to believe the Gospel is not your duty, because faith is the gift of God? But so also is your daily bread the gift of God. Is it the less your duty on that account, to labor to secure it? It is the duty of all men to believe. If you do not believe, it must be because you have not been properly sensible of your danger as a sinner; or because you have been at no pains to understand the word of God; or because you do not appreciate the message which it brings. And whose is the fault? Is it the fault of God, or is it your own fault, that you have not believed? It is your duty to believe. But it is not your duty to exercise a false, or an imperfect faith. It is your duty therefore, to have true and saving faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

It remains only that we consider the effects with which we find true faith always accompanied.

When you really believe any proposition whatever, your mind invariably experiences an impression corresponding with what you perceive in it with which you are interested. If a conviction is created that you are in danger, you will seek to avert that danger. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with *fear*, prepared an ark to the saving of his house." If the communication received,

* 1 John iii. 23. † John iii. 18. ‡ Mark xvi. 16.

presents something desirable as within your reach, you will diligently pursue it. Thus "By faith Moses when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of reward." In a word, that particular disposition, passion, or affection, will be called forth by whatever you believe, which is calculated to evolve it, and it is equally certain that corresponding action will always result.

One among the most striking effects of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, is the sense of spiritual safety which it produces. It was under such influence that Paul thus exulted:—"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."* Yours too, in view of all that the Saviour has done, has perhaps, at some periods, been a similar feeling of triumph.

Another impressive effect of faith, is its sustaining power throughout all our earthly pilgrimage. From the divine word you learn the nature and extent of those privileges purchased for you by the Redeemer, and the securities that pledge their continued possession. These give you at once, unconquerable strength. Pain is as agonizing to you as to other men; you feel disappointments as really as they; and calamity falls as heavily upon your heart as upon theirs.

* Rom. viii. 35–39.

But the word of God comes to your aid, and illuminates the darkest events of your life. "For a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than that of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ; whom having not seen ye love; in whom though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." Relying upon such declarations, faith turns the miseries, and wailings of earth, into songs of deliverance. If many a dark cloud hangs its threatening folds over your pathway, there are select moments when you stand upon the serene heights of the mount of God, and hold exalted communion with the Father of spirits, and with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Finally, faith changes instantly, all your relations with God, and heaven, and eternal things. Whatever you might before have been, now you "are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Faith influences your whole life, and character. Throughout the entire period of your continuance here, it is found every where, working by love, purifying the heart, and overcoming the world. It is the firmest guaranty of a triumphant victory over death and the grave, and a glorious admission into the kingdom and joys of immortal life.

SECTION V.

NATURE OF THE UNION WHICH SUBSISTS BETWEEN CHRIST AND BELIEVERS.

Our union with Christ is by grace; it is effected by the Holy Ghost; it is in its nature spiritual: it is the result of the mutual love of both Christ and believers; it is enjoyed by faith; is sensible and intimate; is firm and perpetual; attended with the happiest consequences.

THE redemption wrought by Jesus Christ, we have seen, in the preceding sections of this chapter, cannot be applied for the salvation of sinners, unless they are brought into a personal union with the Redeemer. Until individual connection with him is secured no deliverance, either from the power or from the penalty of sin, is possible. Out of Christ "God is a consuming fire."* Speaking of Messiah, the angel said:—"Thou shalt call his name *Jesus*, for he shall save his people from their sins."† "In time past *ye* were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But now *in Christ Jesus*, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ."‡ Our salvation rests upon our *individual*, *personal* union with him.

The unalterable conditions of this union we have found to be "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." In the bestowment of his blessings however, God is governed by certain *principles*, and employs specific *agencies*. These are distinct both from each other, and from the conditions in question. In the construction of a palace, a block of marble cannot be admitted, but on *condition* that it be polished; the *principle* upon which it is set, is the design of the architect; and the *agency* employed is the hand of the builder. The conditions have been care-

* Heb. xii. 29. † Matt. i. 21. ‡ Eph. ii. 11–13.

fully surveyed. Let us now consider the *principles*, and the *agency*, by which we are brought into a saving union with our Redeemer.

Regarding the *principles*, little difference is likely to prevail in the opinions of any, who are familiar with the word of divine truth. All agree that they are comprehended in the rich and abounding *grace* of our Heavenly Father. He it is, "Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."* *Grace* is in its nature *free, unmerited favor*. As such it stands in every part of the oracles of truth, in opposition to *works*, and *worthiness;* to all works, and all worthiness, of every kind, and of every degree. Salvation cannot therefore, be by grace any further than the persons upon whom it is conferred are unworthy. To its very idea, utter destitution of merit is absolutely essential. It ceases the moment any claim appears. Were it possible for us to attain to actual merit, our salvation could no longer be "reckoned of grace. It would be of debt."† Repentance, and faith, the conditions, although superinduced by the Holy Spirit, are in an important sense, our own acts, and cannot for this reason be the *procuring, the meritorious cause* of salvation. It is, I am aware, as difficult as it is humiliating for you to divest yourself of the impression, so natural to the human mind, that your salvation is to be gained, at least in part, by labors, and sufferings of your own, which in magnitude and intensity, bear some proportion to the blessings anticipated. The word of God however, points you in a different direction, for the source of your hopes. "Good works," or if you please, conformity, in heart and in life, to the divine injunctions, and conscientious and persevering obedience to all his commandments and ordi-

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* 2 Tim. i. 9. † Rom. iv. 4.

nances, are certainly pleasing to God. Without them there is no salvation. He who does not hate sin, and love holiness; in a word, who has not all the essentials of a sound and healthful Christian experience, is incapable of eternal life. All these however, are strictly *effects*, and not causes of the divine favor. While *you* "work out your own salvation with fear, and trembling," how delightful is the assurance that "it is *God* that worketh in you both to *will*, and to *do*, of his good pleasure."* Without works no man is saved. But grace is the *source* and *origin* of good works;—"For by grace are ye saved," "not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, *created* in Christ Jesus *unto good works*, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."† These are the principles upon which we are brought into union with Christ, and upon which that union will proceed to its final consummation in glory. The ascriptions of thanksgiving, bursting from all Christian hearts are:—"To the praise of *his glorious grace*, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."‡

We next turn our thoughts to the *efficient agency* by which we are brought into union with Christ, and are made partakers of the benefits of his satisfaction.

This is the work eminently, of God the Holy Ghost. I say *efficient agency*, because he employs minor, and inferior instrumentalities, such as the word of truth, and the ordinances of religion. But of what value are all these, without his presence and power? They are wholly, and inevitably ineffectual. The work of the Spirit in the *regeneration* of the soul, is no less important than is the work of Messiah in dying for the *redemption* of the soul. This great doctrine cannot here be fully investigated. I therefore, reserve its consideration at large, for the next chapter, and shall now content myself with two or three brief observations. The

* Phil. ii. 12, 13. † Eph. ii. 8-11. ‡ Eph. i. 6.

impartation of spiritual life, our sanctification, our preservation through our earthly pilgrimage in the love of God, are all blessings of boundless magnitude, for which we are indebted to the Holy Spirit. "You hath *he* quickened," says Paul to the Ephesians, "who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein, in time past, ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the Spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ."* To quicken is to make alive. In religion, it is the *impartation* of spiritual life, that very life which is necessarily the seat of all holy sensibility and action. "When ye were dead, *he* quickened you. He imparted to you life. All spiritual vitality, therefore, in the first place, is from God himself, who is moved to bestow it solely, by "the great love wherewith he loved us." Secondly, This spiritual life, the first impulse towards our personal union with Christ, is imparted by God the Holy Ghost. Messiah himself has so taught us. "It is" said he to his disciples, "the Spirit that quickeneth." And, lastly, the quickening, the *life* given, is "together with Christ." The same life that is in him, is also in you. "This is life eternal." And blessed be God for the declaration of his Son,—"He that liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die." The Holy Ghost is therefore, the *efficient Agent* by whose power and work we are brought into union with our Lord Jesus Christ.

I have already intimated with perhaps, sufficient clearness, that the union under consideration is in its nature, *spiritual.*

"He hath given us of his Spirit," and "hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us."† One principle of life

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* Eph ii. 1-5. † 1 John iv. 13.

pervades both the head, and the members. But is not God the Holy Spirit omnipresent? He is necessarily every where, fills all places, and is consequently, equally present with the impenitent, and the believing. Nevertheless, he dwells with his people in a peculiar manner. His gracious power is exerted to produce in their bosom, effects which other men do not experience. You are led by the Spirit; you are enlightened by the Spirit; you are assisted by the Spirit; you are comforted by the Spirit. Does the Spirit of God dwell in your heart? This important truth is evinced by the appearance in your life, and character, of the fruits of the Spirit, which are "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance, faith."* And in the soul where he dwells, God manifests his glory, and dispenses the blessings of grace, and salvation.

And further. If you are thus united with Christ by gracious and spiritual ties, it is the result of *mutual affection*, both of the Redeemer, and of your own heart.

He has expressed *his* affection in the most glorious and impressive manner, by his mission into our pollated world; by all the acts of his life upon earth; by his tears, and groans, and sufferings, and death upon the cross; by his resurrection from the dead, and his session on high; and by all he is now doing at the right hand of the Father for you; and by the gift of his word to enlighten, and of his Holy Spirit to sanctify and prepare you for his immediate presence and glory. These are all, and each, but so many declarations of his readiness to receive you into union with himself.

You give your consent to this union *by faith*. I say by *faith*, because faith always implies repentance for sin, and is eminently, the *medium* through which we receive, and appropriate the benefits of his great sacrifice. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of

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* Gal. v. 22, 23.

God, even to them that *believe* on his name."* To *believe* on the name of Christ is therefore, to *receive* Christ as the ransom for your soul; to look to him as Israel did to the brazen serpent in the wilderness, for deliverance from misery and death; to flee to "the hope set before us in the Gospel," as the Hebrew who had slain a fellow man unawares, fled to the city of refuge, whose gates were perpetually open to receive him; to submit your heart to be renewed and sanctified by his Spirit. Thus "it is of faith, that it might be by grace."†

The union of true believers with Christ is, I further observe, most endeared and intimate.

How precious is communion with the Redeemer! He has been graciously pleased to become one with us! Nor is this unity a mere figure of speech. We have been endowed with "the mind [the disposition] which was also in Christ"‡—humility, patience, devotion to the glory of God, and to the happiness, and salvation of men. We are one with him in *love*, and in *obedience*, and in *suffering*. Who among you cannot say with Paul:—"I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord;" "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and *the fellowship of his sufferings*, being made conformable to his death."§ For "if we *suffer*, we shall also reign with him."‖ You ask not that yours may be the *joys* only of religion. Gladly do you bear also its labors, and its sufferings. In all respects you desire to follow his steps.

The *intimacy* of your union is illustrated by figures various and striking. "I am the vine," said the Redeemer, "ye are the branches." "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit."** In another place it is said:—"As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body,

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* John i. 12.
‡ Philip. ii. 5.
‖ 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12.
† Rom. iv. 16.
§ Phil. iii. 7–10.
** John xv. 5.

so also is Christ." "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." * The branches are a part of the vine, and derive from it their support and beauty. The members are a part of the body, and are moved and directed by the head. So intimately are you connected with Christ, that what occurs to you, he regards as occurring also to him. "Inasmuch," said he, "as ye did it unto the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me."† And "ye are complete in him."‡ Our union with Christ is most *endeared*, and *intimate*.

Our union with him is also *firm* and *perpetual*.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Who can separate you, dear other Christian, or yourself? And will the Redeemer cast you off? Is he fickle in his nature, or fickle in his affections? "Having loved his own, he loved them unto the end."§ Your union will never be severed by any act of Messiah. Will it be by any act *of yours?* Is your nature renewed, and have you rejoiced in the hopes and promises of eternal life? Will you, can you, now renounce them all, and turn your back upon Christ, and heaven, and glory? It cannot be! The *new nature* forsake Christ! Wholly forget, and abandon Christ! It may be oppressed and sometimes overwhelmed, but it will arise, and throw off its burden. Such a soul may wander far, and long, in vanity, and error, but it will at last be found returning to the cross, and taking its position at the feet of its Redeemer. Forsake Christ! Abandon forever, him who died to save you! The mere professor may do this, but the renewed soul, never. I will not believe it. To this subject however, we shall have occasion to refer hereafter more at large. We need not now pursue it. It was Christ himself, who said of his people:—"I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish."‖

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* 1 Cor. xii. 12–27.
† Matt. xxv. 40.
‡ Col. ii. 10.
§ John xiii. 1.
‖ John x. 28.

Such is the nature of that union with Christ enjoyed by the believer. It is by grace; is brought into being by the Holy Ghost; is spiritual; is formed by the mutual affections of Christ and believers; is enjoyed by faith; is endeared and intimate; and is firm and perpetual. Let us, in conclusion, consider briefly its results.

One of the direct results of union with Christ is the possession of *life;* that life which prepares us for his service here, and his glory in the world to come. "Because I live," said he to his disciples, "ye shall live also."* And "I give unto them eternal life."† You are no longer under the power of death. Now "grace reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord."‡ "I live," said an apostle, "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."§ Here is the unfailing fountain which pours forth its ever-flowing waters, in sparkling beauty. Christ is our life, our spiritual, our eternal life, and "when he shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory."

Another result of the union of believers with Christ, is their union with each other.

All who really love the Saviour are one body, because they are partakers of that one spirit. They compose a society closer and more compact than can be formed by civil institutions, or the friendships of this world. Born in distant countries, speaking different languages, engaged in various temporal pursuits, and distinguished from each other by natural tempers, education, and social position, they yet, are *all one in Christ.* They bear the image of the Redeemer. They love one another, with pure hearts fervently. Is this however, a true picture of the now existing Christian world? Most unhappily it is not. Far from it. Nevertheless it shall be

* John xiv. 19.
† John x. 28.
‡ Rom. v. 21.
§ Gal. ii. 20.

so. God has declared it; Christ has prayed for it; and it is in the nature of religion to bring the result. Several causes have combined to divide at present, professors of Christianity. Some, whatever they may claim, do not follow in all things, the teachings of the word of God. Pure religion has not possession of every heart. Some are ambitious, and others worldly. Many from want of acquaintance with each other, have been led to feel and act towards those who are really the friends of Christ, as if they were in fact his enemies. Conflicting and belligerent denominations, have arisen from this condition of things, which so far as I see, must prevail until their causes are removed. But thanks to our God, universal and perfect concord shall at last come. God has declared it. They shall all "see eye to eye, and speak the same things." Thus too the Redeemer prayed:—"That they all may be one, as thou Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."* The perfect union of all the people of God is therefore necessary that the world may know, and believe in our Lord Jesus Christ. And shall not the result determined by the Father, for which Christ prayed, and which is so desirable and necessary in itself, be consummated? It is also, I have said, in the nature of religion to secure the union of all who love Christ. "There is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one Faith, one baptism, one God, and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."† And shall not all again come into "the unity of the faith?" Let every Christian, each for himself,

* John xvii. 21–23. † Eph. iv. 4–6.

firmly adhere to Christ, be governed by his word, follow in his steps, obey him at every hazard, and they will all, who are united with him, be in union with each other.

The last result I shall mention of our union with Christ, is participation with him in all the benefits of his atonement.

He is your righteousness. You receive from him pardon, and justification. You are adopted into the family of God, and are made heirs of heaven. "Ye are washed, ye are sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."* The outline of the divine image drawn upon your heart in regeneration, the Holy Ghost is daily filling up, and beautifying. He is gradually perfecting the picture. Ultimately it shall be completed, and you shall bear the full image of your glorious Redeemer.

I now close this chapter. We have in its progress seen, as much at large as our circumstances would permit, the conditions of that personal union with our Lord Jesus Christ which is always necessary to the salvation of sinners. These conditions are fixed, and declared by the Redeemer, and they are fully, and minutely, set forth in the word of divine revelation. They are summarily, repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. We have seen that repentance is always preceded and accompanied by conviction of sin, and prayer, and that in its nature, it is deep sorrow for your transgressions, and pollutions, and the turning away from them, in all their forms and relations. In this connection we have examined the tests by which evangelical repentance is to be tried, and the principles upon which it results in your pardon and acceptance with God. Of faith we have looked carefully into the nature, seen what it is you are required to believe, the duty of every one in relation to it, and its legitimate effects. We have closed the chapter with an examination of the nature of the union thus brought

* 1 Cor. vi. 11.

into being, between Christ and believers. Do you now fully understand the conditions of your personal union with our Lord Jesus Christ? Without such union you can cherish no rational hope of salvation. How infinitely momentous is the subject now submitted! May our God enlighten and direct you, and by his Holy Spirit prepare your heart to comprehend, and receive, the whole truth as it is in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

CHAPTER VI.

THE REGENERATION OF THE SOUL, A SPIRITUAL CHANGE, EFFECTED ALONE BY THE HOLY GHOST, IS NECESSARY TO THE SALVATION OF SINNERS.

The Gospel of Christ the ministration of the Spirit; he is a divine person; regeneration ascribed to him alone.

THE Gospel of Christ is eminently, "the ministration of the Spirit."* Messiah was the great promise of the Law. The great promise of the Gospel, is the Holy Ghost. His graces give to the Christian his peculiar character, and qualify him for the possession and joys of eternal life. By his divine power the soul is regenerated. This is the beginning of that spiritual process by which he "makes us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." By his agency the understanding is enlightened, the will subdued, and the affections brought into harmony with the character and attributes of Jehovah. The Holy Ghost is a divine person. By him alone regeneration is accomplished. Let these two propositions be now fully established.

SECTION I.

THE HOLY GHOST IS A DIVINE PERSON.

The personality of the Holy Spirit; his divinity; the Trinity; the special influences of the Spirit.

WHEN you speak of the Holy Ghost what do you mean? Do the terms denote an *agency* merely, or a sacred or

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* 2 Cor. iii. 7, 8.

heavenly *influence* exerted by Jehovah? Such conceptions are I know entertained, but they are infinitely unworthy of the subject. Look into the word of truth, and you will find that the Holy Ghost is a *person*, and that the Holy Ghost *is God*.

The Holy Ghost is a person. This truth is susceptible of the clearest proof. To him are ascribed, in numerous portions of divine revelation, in distinction from both the Father and the Son, the personal powers of rational understanding and will. "God," says Paul, "hath revealed unto us" "the things prepared for them that love him" "by his Spirit," and adds, "The things of God knoweth no *man*, but [they are known to] the *Spirit* of God."* Referring to the gifts and graces which accompanied the reception of the Gospel, such as wisdom, knowledge, faith, prophecy, tongues, and the power to heal, and perform miracles, he says, "All these worketh that one and the self-same *Spirit*, dividing to every one severally as *he will*."† Personal *appellations*—masculine articles and pronouns—when the Scriptures speak of the Spirit, are every where employed. The office of Intercessor is *personal*, and is in a peculiar sense, exercised by him. "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh *intercession* for us, with groanings that cannot be uttered." In other words, he gives us earnestness, love, faith, perseverance, and enables us to exercise deep and agonizing fervor. "And he that searcheth the heart, knoweth what is *the mind of the Spirit*, because *he* maketh intercession for the saints, according to the will of God."‡ In a word, the Holy Spirit is constantly represented as *teaching*, *speaking*, *witnessing*, *leading*, and *comforting* his people; acts which can never be predicated but of a *person*. Have the divine oracles misled us? If not, it is incontrovertibly

* 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11. † 1 Cor. xii. 11. ‡ Rom. viii. 26, 27.

certain that the Holy Spirit is distinctly and definitely a *person.*

The Holy Spirit is God.

By an apostle he is called expressly "the *Eternal* Spirit."* He is therefore eternal. He is also *omniscient.* "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor, hath taught *him?* With whom took he counsel, or who instructed him, and taught him in the paths of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to *him* the way of understanding?"† "The Spirit searcheth *all* things, yea the *deep things* of God."‡ He is *omnipotent.* He exercises, as is unequivocally declared by the divine record, "the power of the Highest."§ The Holy Spirit is *omnipresent.* Of *him* thus beautifully sung the shepherd king of Israel:—"Whither shall I go from thy *Spirit,* or whither shall I fly from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there: if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."‖ The Holy Spirit is therefore, eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent. But these are attributes which belong exclusively to God. Therefore the Holy Spirit is God.

The Holy Ghost, moreover, is, by divine direction, an *object of Christian worship.* "Go ye," said Christ to his apostles, "and teach all nations, baptizing them in the *name* of the Father, and of the Son, and of *the Holy Ghost.*"** Again, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the *Holy Ghost,* be with you all."†† We are required as you here see, to worship him in the solemn acts of baptism, and of prayer. But the Saviour,

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* Heb. ix. 14.
‡ 1 Cor. ii. 10.
‖ Psal. cxxxix. 7–10.
†† 2 Cor. xiii. 14.
† Isa. xl. 13, 14.
§ Luke i. 35.
** Matt. xxviii. 19.

who himself thus directed, has also uttered the authoritative admonition:—"Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."* Is not the Holy Ghost God? But we have proof still more conclusive if possible. He is expressly denominated and *called God*. Take for the sake of brevity, a single passage. Peter thus addresses the false Ananias:—"Why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie unto the Holy Ghost?" "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God."† He *is* therefore, *God*. It cannot be otherwise, because to him belong all the divine attributes; because he is worshipped by all good men; and because he is declared, in so many words, to be God. This great truth never can be shaken. He is the glorious and eternal God.

It is proper in passing, that I should offer a word of explanation regarding the mystery of the *Holy Trinity*.

The Father is God; Jesus Christ the Son is God; and the Holy Spirit is God. Do you worship three Gods? Certainly not. While there is one only living and true God, he has in the economy of redemption, revealed himself to us as *three* persons of that *one* substance, "the same in essence, and equal in divine properties." The *Unity* of God cannot be inconsistent with the *Trinity*, nor the *Trinity* with the *Unity*, since in his word, both are fully and distinctly taught. Can we withhold our assent from the Unity of God? The sacred oracles repeatedly aver that there is but one God. Can we reject the doctrine of the Trinity? The same authority teaches us undeniably, the divinity of the Son, and the personality, and divinity of the Spirit. We have proof equally as satisfactory, that these *persons* are God, as we have that the Father is God. We are in truth, obliged either to abandon wholly, the scriptures, and plunge into the dark and insatiable whirlpool of horrid infidelity, or believe that these three divine persons,

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* Luke iv. 8. † Acts v. 34.

the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, coexist in one supreme and everlasting God. Is the doctrine mysterious? Mysteries inexplicable, are every where. They abound in every object around you. Think you to comprehend fully at present, the mode of *God's* existence? You do not even understand your own! You cannot grasp infinity. Your powers are exceedingly feeble and limited. The perplexity is not so much in the subject, as in yourself.

> ——"Thy vision fails,
> To gaze throughout illimitable space,
> And find the end of infinite."

In addition, on this part of the subject, I barely remark, that the Holy Spirit has, in different ages, endowed the minds of many persons, with *extraordinary* powers. The gift of the Holy Bible—our chart, our director, our infallible guide—is a result of such power. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God."* "The prophecy came not in old time, by the will of man, but holy men of old, spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."† Who can sufficiently estimate the importance and excellency of the sacred scriptures, by which "the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works?" During the apostolic age, the Spirit imparted to many disciples of Christ miraculous gifts. These were manifested in the ability of Christians to speak various languages which they had not learned, to heal the sick, to cast out devils, and to perform other similar works. The design was to confirm the divinity of the Gospel mission, and to establish the truth of the doctrines taught by the apostles. These purposes accomplished, miraculous powers ceased, and exist no more. But the ordinary influences of the Spirit upon the mind, and heart, of men continue, because in every age they are alike necessary. Therefore, said the Saviour, "He shall abide

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* 2 Tim. v. 14. † 2 Pet. i. 31.

with you forever."* Such are the teachings of the Bible respecting the Holy Ghost, and such the special acts of his mercy, put forth for our direction, and salvation.

SECTION II.

REGENERATION IS THE WORK ALONE OF THE HOLY GHOST.

Nature of regeneration; its necessity to salvation; the Spirit alone can effect it; the means he employs; results of the change.

To describe the *nature* of that spiritual change known as *regeneration*, the inspired record employs various terms, and modes of speech. It is a new creation; it is the putting off of the old man with his deeds, and the putting on of the new man: it is the being renewed in the spirit of the mind; it is the being quickened; born again; having Christ formed in the soul, the hope of glory; being made partakers of the divine nature. What does such language as this import? Nothing less surely, than an entire change in your whole spiritual character and condition. It is a *birth*, because it is the commencement of spiritual life. "Ye must be *born* again." The life to which it introduces you is *new*, and the opposite of that which you have before lived. "Therefore if any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a *new creature*. Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." No new faculties are imparted to the soul; its powers are the same as before; but there is infused into them all, a new and spiritual vitality. Your

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* John xiv. 16.

perceptions, affections, and purposes, are wholly changed. When you were under the influence of the flesh all your powers were actuated by worldly considerations. Now they are moved by heavenly impulses. The difference between your old state, and this new condition of things, is that precisely, which distinguishes from each other, sin and holiness, the carnal, and the spiritual mind. These are the primary considerations embraced in the nature of regeneration.

I now remark that this change, is in all cases, positively necessary to salvation.

It is so declared by Messiah himself. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."* This teaching of Jehovah accords with what we know of facts, no less than with the dictates of reason.

Man unregenerated by the Spirit of God cannot be saved, because he remains a sinner. Sin and misery are inseparable. Where the former is, there invariably, is the latter. If they are thus uniformly found together in this world, they must also be uniformly found together in the world to come. Moral qualities are the same in both worlds. In these qualities, and in their influence upon us, the death of the body makes no change. If men go into eternity in their sins, they must be miserable there, for the same reason that they are miserable here. And then the wrath of God, that ever burns against the offender! O, who can bear the wrath of God? Who can flee from the wrath of God? The sinner who dies unregenerate, and consequently in his sins, cannot be saved!

He cannot be saved for another reason. He is depraved, and in that condition, is incapable of salvation. The very essence of depravity, as seen in a former chapter, is the love of sin, which has in the heart, usurped the place of the love

* John iii. 7-12.

of God. Man unchanged by the Holy Ghost, is sensual, worldly, averse to holiness. Spiritual things have no charms for him. Naturally he does not love God in this world, nor will he ever love God in the world to come. He cannot therefore, be saved at death. But may not some period arrive in the far distant future, some epoch in vast eternity, at which salvation may visit the destinies of lost men? No; never, never. The sinner remains under the power of his depravity, cherishing it with unchanging obstinacy, and thus he continues forever, wretched and undone. He is like a man who has taken to his bosom a deadly viper, and perpetually retains it there, though its fangs are every moment inflicting unutterable agony!

I only remark further that regeneration is necessary to salvation, because the joys of heaven are derived from holiness, and man unchanged, takes no pleasure in holiness. Christian happiness here, is of the same character. But Christian happiness is nothing to him in this world. It will be nothing to him in the next. Is heaven the enjoyment of God? It is therefore the enjoyment of *infinite* holiness. But holiness affords the sinner no gratification. What is there in it, which can give him delight? Heaven therefore, contains no joys for him, no delights of which he is capable. There is no place in all the creation of God where the sinner can be happy. Remaining unholy, you are forever incapable of salvation. You are irrecoverably lost!

But who can regenerate the soul? By what power can so great a revolution in the whole internal man, be achieved? Some I am aware, have unhappily concluded that it all consists in the natural effect merely, of truth upon the heart, and imagine that no separate attending divine influence exists, or is necessary. Than this no mistake could possibly be more entire, or dangerous. How with the word of God before you, can you be betrayed into an error so alarming? Who but God has power to control, and change, the perverse and ob-

durate nature of man? The facts, and doctrines of the Gospel, must indeed, be known and believed. Nor can such knowledge, and belief, occur without producing important consequences. Obedience also, to all the commandments, and ordinances, is divinely enjoined. Nor is this obedience *external* merely. It is the obedience also of the *heart*. The devils know, believe the truth, and tremble. The pharisees gave the strictest external obedience to what they supposed to be the law of God, and yet were most vile in his sight. Holy love must pervade the heart, and this is given alone by the Divine Spirit. Without the love of God in the soul faith is dead, and obedience is a vain form. Religion is *life*. "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins."* It is not *action* that produces life, in either our physical or moral nature. The life of the body is not produced by its actions, but on the contrary, its actions are the results of its life. The life is one thing, and the actions that spring from life, are another thing. These are self-evident truths. Spiritual life must exist in the soul to produce spiritual action. This truth also is equally plain. Who can give life, physical or moral, but God? Regeneration can, beyond question, be produced only by God the Holy Ghost.

But why occupy your time in *reasoning* upon this subject? The plain declarations of inspired truth leave no room for doubt regarding it. John avers that it is the direct work, not of man, but of God. "The *sons of God*" are "*born*, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but *of God*."† Peter reiterates the same great truth. In his memorable and eloquent thanksgiving he exclaims:—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, from the dead."‡ Because God is especially the author of

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* Eph. ii. 1. † John i. 13. ‡ 1 Pet. i. 3.

eternal life, through the Redeemer, an apostle attributes our regeneration directly to Christ. "Ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him."* According to the declaration of Messiah, this work of the Father's grace, performed on account of the merits of the Son, is by the immediate agency of the Holy Ghost. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the *Spirit* is spirit." Ye are "born of the Spirit."† Paul also says:—"According to his mercy he saved us by the washing [the spiritual cleansing or purification] of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost."‡ Thus it is clearly seen, that the regeneration of the soul is the work exclusively, and emphatically, of God the Holy Ghost, by the will of the Father, and through the infinite merits of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is proper that I should remark in passing, that this great and radical change is *instantaneous*. In this respect, it is unlike sanctification, also the work of the Spirit, which is gradual, or progressive. Regeneration must, it is obvious, be instantaneous, since between life and death, there can be no interval. The moment you leave the one state, you are necessarily in the other. From the kingdom of darkness, your passage is immediate into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

The Holy Spirit, I also remark, employs in the regeneration of the soul, appropriate *instrumentalities*.

The grand agency in this work is the word of divine truth. "Of his own will," says James, "begat he us *with* the word of truth."§ "Born again," says Peter, "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, *by the word of God* which liveth and abideth forever."‖ Paul also says of the Corinthians, that they were "Begotten *through the Gospel*."** The facts,

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* 1 John ii. 29.
† John iii. 6, 7.
‡ Tit. iii. 5.
§ James i. 18.
‖ 1 Pet. i. 23.
** 1 Cor. iv. 15.

the doctrines, the duties, the exhortations, the appeals, the motives of the Gospel, must be brought to bear upon the mind, and they must be understood, believed, and obeyed. How the word of truth reaches your understanding, and heart, is not a matter of importance. You may peruse personally, or a friend may read for you, the holy oracles, or the divine message may be communicated from the pulpit, by exhortations, or by religious books, by conversations, prayers, or general Christian intercourse. A knowledge, understanding, and belief of the truth, are gained, and with these the work of the Spirit is always, so far as we know, (in cases of adults, of sound mind,) associated. The influences exerted by these means, upon the hearts of men, are appropriately the influences of the Spirit. All therefore, who come within their circle, must feel some effect from their action upon the mind. Their effects will of course, be more or less deep, and permanent, as they shall be favored or otherwise, by the constitutional temperament of those concerned, and the force of their present temptations, and restraints. Some men therefore, enjoying the same spiritual advantages, are more, and some less strongly influenced by religious considerations. The Holy Ghost operates upon the mind and heart of them all, through the medium of appointed instrumentalities.

And further. As rational beings, you each possess the powers necessary for submitting to Christ, and obeying the Gospel. The great obstacles in your way are not found on the part of God, nor in the nature of religion, but arise exclusively, from your own sinful disposition. The Spirit, whose influences you are required to seek by prayer, will give you ability to surmount every impediment. The invitations of the Gospel to repent, and believe, it is your duty, and your privilege, by his aid to obey. He calls upon you to do so, and if you fail to yield your heart to his guidance; if you disobey his injunctions and monitions; you "resist

the Spirit," and persevering in this course, you finally banish from your heart forever, his holy presence. What now remains for you, but "a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries?" If therefore, among those who hear the Gospel, any shall finally perish, the fault and sin are wholly their own. You may through the Spirit, successfully seek Christ. Is it not in this view of the case, surprising that all intelligent men who hear the Gospel, do not obtain salvation? But no, they every where, remain indifferent! They are deaf to the claims of the Gospel.

Why this strange carelessness? You are not ignorant of the divine will, nor of your own necessities, yet you will not come to Christ that you may have life. Proof this, incontestible, that power is necessary to regenerate the soul, beyond the mere moral effect of the means employed. The facts, the doctrines, the motives, and other considerations contained in the Gospel, are as we have said, presented to the mind. But the moral influence of these agencies never of itself, proves sufficient. Some power above, and beyond all this, is wanted. Whither do you look? What power is, or can be exercised? Your prayers suggest the answer. Upon your knees you bow down, and you supplicate Jehovah to influence, and dispose the hearts of your friends, to embrace Christ! But why pray, if the simple understanding, and belief of the truth, are sufficient? The Gospel has been read by them, and preached to them, and arguments, and persuasions have been added, of *every* description. They have understood the subject and confessed their duty to repent, and believe, and obey Christ, but they do not move, they do not yield their heart to God! Every moral power has been used without producing the required result. Additional power is necessary. But what kind of power is this? Supernatural power of course. This it is, for which you pray, and which the Spirit of God always exercises in the regenera-

tion of the soul. Without this, no one ever was, or ever would be brought to Christ.

This universal reluctance to true religion, among all men; a reluctance so deeply rooted and firm, that to overcome and subdue it, requires supernatural power: is a strange condition of things! How can we account for it? The depravity of the heart explains the mystery. Depravity, of which as we have seen, all are partakers, invariably develops itself in a disrelish more or less strong, for spiritual things. Those therefore, and unhappily there are such, who deny the influence of the Spirit of God in conversion, beyond, and apart from the moral means he employs, are in order to preserve the equilibrium of their theological systems, obliged to discard also the doctrine of human depravity. If men are depraved, if their very nature is corrupt and perverted, it is certain that nothing short of a direct exercise of divine power is competent to correct the evil. is belief in human depravity abandoned? Then there is no need for the blessings of the Spirit, or advantage in the exercise of prayer! Religion is a cold system of heartless formality, a mere scheme of ethics. But all men are depraved; all entertain an inveterate disrelish for holiness. Until this is overcome, no presentations of divine truth, however clear or affecting, will render the service of God pleasing to the soul. The Holy Ghost must impart spiritual sensibility, and life, and love. Through his presence and influence only is depravity surmounted, disinclination removed, and the soul stimulated to spiritual action. Is the power of the Holy Spirit thus exercised upon any man? Although before, it was impossible to move him, now he cannot be restrained. He at once, and boldly, renounces the world, the flesh, and Satan, with all their pomps and vanities, and glories in the love, and service, of our Lord Jesus Christ. Such are the moral agencies, and the divine influences, employed by the Holy Spirit, in the great work of regeneration.

In conclusion, refer briefly, to some of the most obvious results of this spiritual change.

Will regeneration be attended always, and immediately, with an overflowing in the heart of unmingled joy? Not invariably. Far otherwise you may have really found it. If you are in truth renewed, so far as you are deficient in faith, grieve the Holy Spirit, or fail in duty, you will surely not rejoice, but will meet miseries, and afflictions. And through life you will find that religion has its pains as well as its pleasures, and the former are as conclusive proof of its reality as the latter. Yours will be alternately, hopes and fears, and joys and sorrows. But there are results associated with these, which are unfailing. They are an obedient will, an humble spirit, holy affections, and a life devoted to the glory of God, and the salvation of men.

These are the best evidences of your change. Without them, it is certain you have not experienced "the renewing of the Holy Ghost," since his sanctifying influence, while it is the bond which unites all his people upon earth, also gives "fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord," in heaven. The Holy Ghost, to preserve your judgment from error, has given you his word. He communicates no knowledge except what is there contained. Yet in answer to prayer, he purifies your spiritual vision, gives you boldness, confidence, Christian zeal, the necessary courage in every conflict, comfort in every trial, invigorates your devotions, and enables you to appropriate to yourself the promises of God.

Another marked result of regeneration is a cheerful compliance with the divine commandments and ordinances.

The opinion has been by too many entertained, that the influences of the Spirit of God render unnecessary a strict compliance with the forms of religion. Not the forms say they, but the substance of religion is important. Our exhortations to obedience are often answered by such a plea as

this, *We* seek a *spiritual* religion! And do not we also? What? Are spirituality, and obedience, the antagonists of each other? They are inseparably united. He can never be really spiritual, who is not truly obedient. All the graces of the Gospel are, indeed, oppressed and enfeebled by neglecting, and they are excited and strengthened by diligently complying with those acts of obedience taught and enjoined in the divine word, and which in every age, have characterized the people of God. The regenerated man is submissive. He is taught in every duty, to look to God, and to rely upon his aid for its accomplishment. He is not lifted up with spiritual pride, and self-consequence, but feels the necessity of perpetual divine support and guidance. Without these, his Christian course must always be feeble and unsteady. The emotion most prevalent in his bosom is gratitude to God, by the gracious communications of whose Spirit, he has been sustained and directed.

Thus, briefly, have we seen the nature of regeneration, that it is essential to salvation, that the Spirit alone is competent to the work, the means he employs in its accomplishment, and the results of this radical and glorious change.

Permit me in closing this chapter, affectionately to entreat you to seek carefully, and prayerfully, a perfect understanding of the vital doctrine now submitted, and a full compliance with all its requirements. "Resist not the Spirit," who is ever at your side, ready to extend the requisite aid. "Pray in the Spirit," and your supplications will be fervent and effectual. "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." All the means of grace and duties of religion, are so many appropriate instrumentalities by which spiritual influence is to be sought, divine blessings invoked, worldliness overcome, and salvation triumphantly achieved.

CHAPTER VII.

THE UNION OF BELIEVERS WITH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, CONFERS UPON THEM NUMEROUS, RICH, AND DISTINGUISHED PRIVILEGES.

The pardon of sins; justification; adoption; the promises; hope; final perseverance of the saints in grace.

In the preceding chapters I have brought in review before you successively, the condition of mankind as sinners, depraved, miserable, and helpless; their redemption by the great sacrifice and atonement of the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ; and the means by which the sinner, and the satisfaction for sin, are brought together, so that the merits of Christ are made available for his salvation. Have you understood, believed, and experienced in your heart, all these great truths? If so, you are a partaker of the blessings of the covenant of grace. You are a Christian, a child of God through Christ Jesus. Two inquiries now immediately, present themselves to your mind. As a redeemed sinner, saved by grace, what are my PRIVILEGES? What are my DUTIES? Both these I will endeavor briefly, but satisfactorily to answer.

Your *privileges* as a Christian, shall first receive our attention.

What are they? Can they be recounted in detail? Their number, and magnitude, preclude the possibility. Let some of those which are the most distinguished, be considered. No more are you the slave of sin. Darkness has been driven hence. The light of heaven now pours its beams upon your soul. The chains of Satan which bound you, are broken. Raised above the world, and its debasing influences, you

stand erect, and honored, among the sons of God! *It is your privilege to enjoy the full pardon of all your sins; to receive from God entire justification; to be admitted as one among the adopted children of the Most High; to have conferred upon you all those blessings included in the promises of the divine word; to be animated by the sustaining power of hope; and to persevere in grace unto the attainment of final and complete salvation!* These gifts are precious, beyond the power of angels to compute! That your conceptions of them may be more clear, and distinct, let them be more fully considered.

SECTION I.

THE BELIEVER IN CHRIST RECEIVES THE FULL PARDON OF ALL HIS SINS.

Definitions; the pardon of sins is real; the nature of pardon; the medium through which it is given; demands daily prayer.

THE *pardon of sins* is the act by which an offender is released from the penalty of his transgressions. The *remission* of sins, the *pardon* of sins, and the *forgiveness* of sins, are phrases of like import. They are constantly occurring in the word of God, and in all our prayers, and religious conversations. To us all no forms of speech are more familiar. The pardon, remission, forgiveness of sins, is nearly allied to *justification*, yet it differs from it in several important respects. An innocent man when falsely accused and acquitted is justified, but not pardoned, and a criminal may be pardoned, but not justified, because he cannot

be pronounced innocent. As the larger circle includes the smaller, so justification embraces pardon. Remission of sins frees us from blame, and punishment. Justification does all this, and more. It gives us a title even now, to honor, and everlasting life, and in heaven places us in a position as high, and as glorious, as if we had never sinned. Were we pardoned only, we should escape condemnation, but by justification the right is conferred, through our Lord Jesus Christ, to glory, and immortality, for which we are prepared by the regeneration, and sanctification of the Holy Ghost. At present however, we are concerned only with the remission of sins.

And is *the pardon of sins a reality?* May we, wretched offenders, expect the free and full forgiveness of all our transgressions? Is not the hope of such a deliverance too great to be indulged? Let the language in which "*Jehovah proclaims himself to man*," be our answer. He is "the Lord, the *Lord God*, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness, and in truth, keeping mercy for thousands, *forgiving* iniquity, transgression, and sin."* Under what circumstances however, is this surpassing clemency to be exercised towards us? An inspired prophet thus explains:—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and unto our God, for he will *abundantly pardon*."† Said the Saviour to his disciples:—"Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven."‡ To the Colossians Paul made this declaration:—"God *hath forgiven* you all trespasses."§ These authorities are in point: they are conclusive. Who first believes the holy word, can for a moment, question the glorious truth, that God *does indeed*, forgive sins? Our offences, multiplied and aggravated as

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* Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.
† Isa. lv. 7.
‡ Luke vi. 37.
§ Col. ii. 13.

they are, may all be pardoned! "Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance unto Israel, and the remission of sins."* This is no dream of an enthusiastic imagination; no fond conceit of a credulous fancy; but a sober, a happy reality! Of every genuine believer it may be truly said, in the language of the Redeemer, "Thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee."

But *the nature of pardon.* What is it?

The pardon of sins delivers at once, the guilty from the curse of the law. It places in a condition of safety, those who were exposed to destruction. The judgments which hung threateningly, fearfully, over your head, it turns away, and God "lifts up upon you the light of his countenance." Glorious considerations! To the dark and careless mind they may indeed, sound like empty declamation, but to you, conscious of your misery, and danger: deeply humbled under a sense of your unworthiness; ashamed of your accumulated transgressions; to you, filled with alarm lest you should even now, have passed the boundaries of mercy; how precious are these divine assurances! You are painfully alive to the great truth that you do not deserve to be thus favored. But God is not moved to extend his forgiveness by your merits, but by his own infinite love and grace. "I, even I, am he," saith Jehovah, "that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."† Yet in this gracious dispensation, paradoxical as it may at first appear, he acts in accordance with *the strictest justice.* Are you sincerely penitent? Do you truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? You are therefore, inseparably one with him. And of all who sustain this relation an apostle says, "God is *faithful* and *just* to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."‡ To secure this

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* Acts v. 31. † Isa. xliii. 35. ‡ 1 John i. 9.

privilege for every believer, the blood of Jesus Christ is all powerful. "For if [under the Mosaic economy] the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctified to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall *the blood of Christ*, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself [illegible] purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God."* The joy which [illegible] is heightened by a collateral truth. When *God* pardons, all your sins are forgiven! He does not remit some, and retain others. He graciously "blots them all out of the book of his remembrance." Your nature is indeed, not yet perfect. Sinful dispositions will still [illegible] you are liable to be betrayed. These will injure your spirituality, [illegible] you to painful chastisements. All this admonishes you to continue humility, watchfulness, prayer, and daily repentance. Yet, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all sin."†

Having thus considered the reality, and the nature of pardon, we proceed to inquire into the *medium* through which this blessing is received.

We have before seen that sin is not immediately remitted on account abstractly, of the sacrifice of Christ, but that you remain under condemnation, notwithstanding all he has done, until you, by some means, personally accept and receive the benefits of his satisfaction. Some act on your part must precede such an application of his redemption as results in the remission of your sins. To his entering upon the office of Redeemer, and performing all that it required, your consent was not necessary. He because it was his pleasure, offered an infinite satisfaction to divine justice on behalf of

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* Heb. ix. 13, 14. † 1 John i. 7.

sinners. This satisfaction *you* are by the Gospel, called upon to *accept*. To the summons thus made, multitudes alas, choose to pay no special regard! They thereby reject the offers of Christ, and are necessarily lost forever! Your own personal consent *must* be given, or you can never participate in the blessings of redemption. *How* is this consent given? In other words, what is the medium of pardon? On this point the several prevailing classes of Christians are unfortunately not agreed. Is pardon obtained by *baptism alone?* Is it by *faith and baptism?* Is it by *faith* alone? These inquiries are unspeakably important, since a mistake here, will surely lead you away from the fountain of life, and prove inevitably fatal to your best and most cherished hopes. Can they not be determined? They *must* so far as you are concerned, be now fully *settled*, and *decided*. To this task we address ourselves.

Does *baptism alone*, secure the pardon of sins?

Baptism alone! Why ask such a question? Who believes any such thing? If *no one*, it is very well. But what else *can* be the opinion of those who administer the rite to infants, and expect from it the consequences claimed in the Formularies, Catechisms, and Standards of their respective churches? In one quarter you are instructed that baptism is the regenerating act, and that by it you are "made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven."* In another you are taught, that by baptism you enter into the covenant of grace, of which that ordinance is the *sign* and the *seal*, and that it not only holds forth, and exhibits, but actually *confers* upon all those who worthily receive it, "whether of age, *or infants*, all the benefit of the death of Christ."† By *baptism* an *infant* is made "a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." It has "conferred upon it, all the

* Book of Common Prayer. † Westminster Confession of Faith.

benefits of the death of Christ!" All this we are taught by the Standards, is done for an infant by its baptism. An infant we all know, is incapable of any *moral* action whatever. The efficacy, since there is no love, or faith, or devotion of heart, must attach exclusively to the baptism! These denominations therefore, believe, they must believe, that sins are pardoned through the medium of *baptism alone!* So their Standards teach, and they *profess* to believe them. What shall I say of this wild theory? Must I stop to disprove it? Since in the whole word of God, there is not one syllable of authority in its support, and it is in itself, in the last degree unreasonable, its simple statement would seem to be sufficient for its refutation.

We proceed to the second inquiry. Do we receive the pardon of sins through the medium of *faith, and baptism?*

This doctrine, though at first view, somewhat more rational than that which attributes forgiveness to baptism *alone*, will be found upon examination, to be equally repugnant to both scripture, and reason. It is in fact, simply a new and revised edition of the old volume of errors which found its way into the Church at a very early period, and has been in every age, productive of the most melancholy consequences. The Reformation, of which the leading doctrine was "*Justification by Faith*," swept away many a baseless dogma, and superstitious formality. These unhappily survived, have been transmitted to our times, and are now found prevailing all around us, even among devout Christians, who in other respects are justly esteemed as eminently evangelical. I can readily conceive how, in days of Gothic darkness, and ignorance, baptismal regeneration, baptismal initiation into the covenant of grace, and baptismal pardon of sins, might find a lodgment in the minds of men; but why, since the Bible, and science, have diffused their light over the nations, they should still maintain their hold, is not so easy to determine. Shall I attempt to unravel the mystery? When a

sinner is regenerated by the Holy Spirit, and thereby becomes a child of God, really enters into the covenant of grace, and is sealed by the divine Spirit, "unto the day of redemption." his sins are actually and truly pardoned; but of this the experimental knowledge must be obtained by faith. To faith the promises are made, because by it you appropriate to yourself, and enjoy, the blessings of the covenant. Faith gives the evidence of regeneration. Its exercise is one of the first acts of the "new creature." What faith is among the internal graces of the Spirit, baptism is among the external acts of the Christian, one of the primary and most important of his *obedience*. It is therefore, the appropriate *outward declaration of his previous internal change*. These are the scriptural representations of the subject. But multitudes, in consequence of defective information, and confusion of thought, have confounded the *sign*, with *the thing signified*. Thus they have most unhappily, mistaken *baptism* the mere *declaration*, for *regeneration* the *true* spiritual change. Further. Baptism is scripturally administered only when the person who receives it, professes to be regenerate, and consequently already admitted to the blessings of the covenant of grace. But when truth ceased to be understood, it was supposed that his baptism made him a member of the covenant of grace, and that by his *baptism* were "*conferred* all the benefits of the death of Christ." Still further. Because believers *only*, and therefore *pardoned* persons, were originally baptized—and *all* such received baptism—it was at length, imagined that the baptism *procured* the pardon.

Such I presume to have been about the process through which the conclusions in question found their way to the favor of the friends and advocates of Christianity. How impressive the illustration thus given of the melancholy truth, that there is in the minds of men, ever an inherent tendency to pass from the substance to the mere forms of

religion. The transit from the one to the other, alas, how easy! O how frequent! The ordinances of Christ, instead of being administered to the really *spiritual*, who alone are entitled to receive them, are given to the *carnal*, and for what? To produce a condition of things of which they are utterly incapable, and for which they were never intended! They are expected to *impart* the spiritual state. According to the doctrine which gives them this power, the *shadow* brings into existence the substance, and not the *substance* the shadow! Such errors wither the very soul of Christianity. How, under their influence, can religion fail to become a mere formality! How can it continue to possess either power or life! Of all this what shall I say? Baptism, allow me solemnly to assure you, is not regeneration, and never produces it: baptism brings no one, of any age, or of any character, into the Covenant of Grace; never in any case, "confers the benefit of the death of Christ;" it is no "seal" of any kind; and baptism never procures the actual pardon of sins. In these conclusions I am amply sustained by the whole word of God, and shall be fully justified by your own good sense and intelligence. I do not, as you will hereafter see, depreciate the importance and obligation of baptism. But I pray you not to misconceive its character, and design, and thus destroy the beautiful symmetry of religion, mar the fairest work of God; especially (it is hazardous, it is destructive) do not mistake the forms of religion for its life; its mere scaffolding for the temple of God; the robe which adorns his person, for the messenger of light from heaven.

But I am reminded that several passages of scripture do really, appear to suspend the actual pardon of sins upon the condition of baptism. Let us glance at these passages. "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins."* "And he came

* Mark i. 4.

into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins."* And Peter said to the people at pentecost, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins."† Repentance, baptism, and the remission of sins, are it will be seen, in these, and other similar passages, associated with each other. Those who were addressed by John, and the apostles, could plainly however, have derived no benefit from *baptism* without *repentance*, nor, on the other hand, could they have evinced the *sincerity* of their repentance without baptism. A refusal to have professed their faith in Christ, in this form so peremptorily appointed, must at that time, have thrown *suspicion* over their whole character. All true penitents instructed by inspired teachers, could not fail, when they had learned that *believing* in Christ, they were *commanded to be baptized* in his name, and thus make an open avowal of their subjection to him, heartily to comply. For these reasons repentance, and baptism must, in their minds, always have been associated with each other, and with the pardon of sins. It is however, at the same time equally evident, that the *external* act of baptism could not in *itself* be effective, or acceptable in the sight of God, any further than it was an avowal of the parties baptized, of their *faith* in the Lord Jesus Christ. The importance of baptism therefore, consisted in the public manifestation which it gave of *faith in Christ*, and subjection to him, without which the most ardent *professions* of repentance could hardly have been regarded as sincere. It was to *faith* therefore, as developing itself in *repentance*, and manifested in *baptism*, that strictly speaking, the forgiveness of sins was promised. So it was then, and so it is in every age. When the will of Messiah is truly known and appreciated, genuine repentance is invariably if practicable, fol-

* Luke iii. 3. † Acts ii. 38.

lowed with a hearty submission to him in his ordinances. Identical with these conclusions, are the teachings of the apostolical commission.* "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth, [the Gospel] and is baptized, shall be saved, and he that believeth not, shall be damned." Most forcibly do we here find the duty of baptism inculcated upon every believer, while a statement of the converse of the proposition, "He that *believeth not* shall be damned," since it does not include baptism, proves that it is not the absence of *baptism* that is fatal to pardon, and therefore to salvation, but the absence of *faith* in our Lord Jesus Christ.†

There is, employing Hebrew ideas, which as every one knows, abound in the New Testament, an *actual* pardon of sins, and a *ceremonial* pardon. The actual pardon of sins is received by grace, through *faith*. Your *baptism* is the ceremonial pardon, or in accordance with our forms of speech, the outward declaration of the remission of sins previously received by faith. These expositions are entirely applicable to the two remaining principal passages upon which reliance is placed, to sustain the doctrine of baptismal pardon. In one of them, Ananias said to Saul, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins."‡ What, *actually!* Certainly not. Before his baptism he had "received his sight," and been "filled with the Holy Ghost."§ Was he not then, actually pardoned? Can an unpardoned man be full of the Holy Ghost? In what sense then, did his baptism wash away his sins? In a *ceremonial*, or *figurative* sense only. It was the outward declaration of the internal cleansing by the Holy Ghost, which he had already abundantly received. In the other passage Peter speaking of the flood, says that in the ark, "Eight souls were saved by

* Mark xvi. 15, 16.
‡ Acts xxii. 16.
† Ripley's Notes, in loco.
§ Acts ix. 17–19.

water," and adds:—"The like *figure* whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."* Baptism he declares, is a "*figure.*" The transactions of which baptism is the figure, save us. These were embodied in the great sacrifice of the Redeemer, of which the consummating act was his resurrection from the dead. Our sins are not surely, pardoned actually, by our compliance with the figure, but by our embracing the substance, receiving Jesus Christ by faith.

Let the whole class of passages of which these now examined, are the most striking examples, be passed in review, and it will be found that none of them sustain the doctrine they are relied upon to support. They all hold forth in a figure the means by which our pardon is obtained. In baptism we express our faith in the efficacy, and sufficiency of what Christ did for our redemption; profess to have received the pardon sought; renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil; and take our position fully and publicly, on the side of Jesus Christ. Now would it not be exceedingly inappropriate, indeed contradictory, for any one to do all this, who had not really received the forgiveness of his sins by faith, which in baptism he professes? The sign is false, because the thing signified has not occurred. But baptism incidentally represents also the cleansing which we receive by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore the ordinance is always in water. It is the being "born of water," which is the figure of being "born of the Spirit."† But is it proper for any one to receive the outward washing who has not the inward purification? Much less can the external "bath"‡ *procure* the internal renewal. Shall that

* 1 Pet. iii. 20, 21. † Tit. iii. 5. ‡ λουτρον.

ordinance which Jesus Christ has commanded you to employ as a profession that you rest your hopes of salvation upon what he has done *for* you in his great sacrifice, and *in* you by his Holy Spirit, be mistaken, and prostituted as a means of *procuring* your pardon and cleansing? Such an opinion, and practice, belittles religion, and casts a pall upon the very centre of its brightness.

You now see plainly, that the least that can be said of any of the passages in question, is that they do not require so to be interpreted as to suspend the actual pardon of sins upon the condition of baptism. There is not indeed, a single text in the word of God in which this is taught. The doctrine is unscriptural. It must of necessity, be rejected.

Let us now subject it to the test of *reason.*

Is baptism necessary to the pardon of your sins? That ordinance must be administered by some *man;* a minister of the Gospel. In *his hands* therefore, your pardon is placed. You cannot be pardoned unless he choose to baptize you! You must look not to God only, but to your minister also! We are therefore, led tamely back—strange retrogression—to the old, and exploded dogma, "that the forgiveness of sins is in the hands of the priests of religion!" Besides, if sins are forgiven only in baptism, what is to secure the pardon of all those sins which you commit after baptism? You had better defer your baptism, as they did in the age of the emperor Constantine, until you come to die, and then have them all pardoned at once, and so go pure to heaven! But this would be unapostolic, and a violation of the commandments of Christ. Call you this reasonable?

The religion of Christ is made up of two parts, the vital and the ceremonial. These are closely united, but they must not be confounded, nor mistaken for each other. The vital is wholly spiritual. The religion of the soul is "not meat and drink, [does not consist in outward observances] but

righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."* The spiritual change essential to that higher life which religion gives, always *develops* itself in obedience to the commandments, and ordinances of Christ. True, the judgment of the renewed person may be misled as to what these commandments and ordinances really are, and also as to the designs they were intended to subserve. In his essays at obedience he may therefore, err egregiously. But he will invariably, seek to do what *he believes* God has enjoined. "For this is the love of God [the proof of its existence] that ye keep his commandments."† Vital religion is thus *developed,* but is in *itself* wholly spiritual. All those who possess it, bear the image, cherish the spirit, glory in the cross, and delight in the service of Christ.

Religion has also its *ceremonials.* This is true of every dispensation, the Patriarchal, and the Mosaic, as well as the Christian. Their forms differed; their ceremonies were dissimilar; but their essence was, and is the same. Abraham, and Moses, and Paul, had as to its vitality, the same religion. They were animated by the same Spirit; they loved and worshipped the same God; and they labored to promote the same great end. But they were under obligations to observe very different ceremonies, prescribed by the forms of the dispensations under which they lived. The ceremonials of Christianity, both of which are commemorative ordinances, are baptism and the Lord's Supper. They are simple, beautiful, impressive, pre-eminently adapted to increase the faith, augment the joy, animate the zeal, and strengthen the holy resolutions of the children of God. After all however, these are only the *ceremonials,* the mere dress of religion:—"The outward and visible signs, of the inward and spiritual grace." They illustrate, and characterize, but they never produce the new creature, nor are they

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* Rom. xiv. 17. † 1 John v. 3.

any part of its substance. Between the vital, and the ceremonial in religion, there is a natural and very important relation. God has associated them. Yet there is no such connection between them as that the one is dependent upon the other for its existence.

I am now prepared to inquire whether the conclusion is *reasonable* that God has suspended the actual pardon of sins upon that which is ceremonial in religion, and not upon that alone which is vital? Nothing is more *unreasonable.* A multitude of contingencies may prevent a truly regenerated man from being baptized. His judgment may, as we have intimated, be misled; or perchance, no administrator can be had; or physical inability, or some other impediment may intervene. The great mass of Christians around us have never been baptized. Have they been sprinkled, or had water poured upon them, in the name of the Trinity? No such form can be baptism, because Christ has not sanctioned it; and because it does not hold forth the great events which baptism was instituted to represent. Is such form regarded as emblematical of the purification of the Spirit? But the scriptures look beyond this, to the sacrifice of Christ through whom the Spirit is given. The cleansing of the Spirit is to the great sacrifice secondary and incidental. Our baptism refers *immediately* to the burial and resurrection of Christ. If *these* are not held forth there is no *baptism.* And besides, this ceremony was perhaps administered in infancy, an age at which no one is *capable* of baptism. Multitudes of our brethren are therefore, not baptized. Are they all unpardoned? What if they should die, as they probably will, unbaptized? They must be either saved, or lost. If they are lost, God's word will be broken, for he says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."* They believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. But if they are saved,

* Acts xvi. 31.

then the divine declaration must fail, because their sins are not pardoned! They "die in their sins," and of all such Christ himself asseverates, "Whither I go ye cannot come."* They cannot go to heaven! It follows therefore, if baptism is essential to the pardon of sin, that the believer who is unbaptized, can neither be saved nor lost! Is such doctrine reasonable?

You now see that the doctrine which makes baptism necessary to the actual pardon of sins is unsustained by a single authority in the word of God, and that it violates all the principles of reason and common sense. Indeed it is palpably *antiscriptural*. Baptism certainly belongs to that class of actions known in the scriptures as "works of righteousness." If Baptism is necessary to pardon, then it is also necessary to our salvation, since if we are unpardoned we surely cannot be saved. Paul says, "By *grace* are ye saved." "Not of works." We *are* saved, partly at least, by *works!* Was Paul *mistaken?* If not, the advocates of baptismal pardon are wrong. The doctrine is in irreconcilable hostility to salvation by grace.

The third inquiry remains to be answered;—What is the true medium of the pardon of sin? I reply, it is *faith alone.*

It is procured by the *blood* of Christ, since "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."† It is conferred by the *grace* of God; "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."‡ It is received and enjoyed by faith in the Redeemer; "To him gave all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him, shall receive remission of sins."§ And it is professed and declared in baptism. The Eunuch said to Philip, "See, here is water. What doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If

* John viii. 21.
† 1 John i. 7.
‡ Eph. i. 7.
§ Acts x. 47.

thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe."* And when the people of Samaria "*believed* Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."† This is decisive. We need not further pursue the subject.

Thus have we seen that the pardon of sins is a glorious reality; that its nature is most animating; and the medium through which you receive it, is distinguished for its safety and grace. It is necessary only to add, that in our most exalted earthly state, we are exceedingly imperfect. We are constantly liable to fall into errors and sins, to avoid which requires perpetual watchfulness and humility. We are wholly dependent upon God for his pardoning and sustaining mercy. It is our privilege and our duty, to offer unceasing prayers to him for these blessings. "Forgive us [O Lord, day by day] our trespasses."‡ Nor are our petitions unheard. God regards, answers, forgives, and saves with an everlasting salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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* Acts viii. 36–38. † Acts viii. 12. ‡ Luke xi. 4.

SECTION II.

THE BELIEVER RECEIVES FROM GOD ENTIRE JUSTIFICATION.

The nature of justification; the medium through which it is conferred; the manner of its bestowment; the time at which it is given; its practical influence upon the renewed mind.

JUSTIFICATION, another of the blessings of our union with Christ in the Covenant of Grace, is the act which declares a man just, and righteous. Its *opposite* is condemnation. Its *author* is God. "It is God that *justifieth*. Who is he that *condemneth?*"* *Guilty men* are its subjects. "The judgment was by one [our primal father] to *condemnation*, but the free gift is of many offences unto *justification*."† All those who are the recipients of this grace, were *previously*, "dead in trespasses and sins," and until "renewed in the spirit of their mind." "the children of wrath, even as others."‡ "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but [now] ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."§ He who is under the law, is under the curse, but all those who through the grace of God in Jesus Christ, are pardoned and accepted, are justified. "He," said the Saviour, "that believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come unto condemnation."‖ *Repentance* and *faith*, are peculiar exercises of our own mind; *regeneration* is the work of the Holy Spirit in our soul; but *justification* is a glorious act of God the Father in our behalf. It is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. It is called "*the sentence of justification*," pronounced by Jehovah in his judicial capacity, and which declares us free from any charge of sin. The *testimony* of justification, though satisfactory, is peculiar. You are not

* Rom. v. 16. † Rom. viii. 33, 34. ‡ Eph. ii. 3.
§ 1 Cor. vi. 11. ‖ John v. 24.

to look to any express revelation apart from the divine word, as evincive of its existence. God now makes no new revelations. Nor are you to rely upon any persuasions of your own mind as conclusive. Many, as for example, the Jews in the days of Messiah, *believe* themselves justified, who are truly in the deepest condemnation. To make a thing consist in the persuasion of the mind that it is real, is an absurdity. The sentence which declares your justification is no personal persuasion, or incomprehensible revelation to you, but it is the voice of God in the Gospel proclaiming that, "By Jesus Christ all that believe are justified."* You must therefore, refer to his word, and compare with it your own heart and character, for the testimony of your gracious state. Do you delight in the service and people of God? Does your faith in Christ work by love, purify the heart, and overcome the world? Your acquittal is a joyful certainty. You are justified. Jehovah henceforward, acts towards you as if you had yourself perfectly fulfilled the law. And in heaven you shall stand amid the bright hosts of light unimpeached, pure, righteous, immortal.

But how is this transcendent blessing attained?

You do not doubt that it is a reality, a glorious boon, in reservation for the good, and the holy. There is a land of joy, a paradise of Jehovah, a heavenly world where God himself shall wipe away all tears, and where "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain. These words are true and faithful."† But we are actually guilty! Can this guilt be annihilated? Can we ever feel and act, and be regarded as if we had never sinned? God sees things as they are. He is a being of unchanging justice. His infinite perfections forbid that he should swerve in the smallest degree, from the eternal principles of holy rectitude. How then can he receive, and treat

* Acts xiii. 39. † Rev. xxi. 45.

as innocent and just, those who are in fact guilty? He has himself developed the means by which this can be done. What are they? How shall we attain to justification? By a strict compliance with the holy law of God, the original condition of life? This cannot be. We are already unholy, and the guilt of sin is not removed by subsequent good conduct. "The law is holy, just, and good." The law cannot therefore declare us innocent. It cannot without the necessary satisfaction, approve. We have no ability to give that satisfaction. We cannot make ourselves pure. On this point God's word is explicit. "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight."* Yet we shall never reach the glorious object sought without ample satisfaction to the law.

But must the law still be obeyed? Are not its claims now annulled? Is not the Gospel at present, the only law that governs our relations with Jehovah? Do not, I pray you, fall into error here. Too many have committed the melancholy mistake which supposes that the Gospel is designed to supersede the law. They have imagined that since the introduction of the Gospel, the law is no longer obligatory upon men, and that with the Gospel as a new and milder code, the terms of which are repentance, faith, and obedience, the sinner has now only to offer a sincere compliance, and his reward will be salvation! Was this the design of Christ in his mission among men? He himself teaches us far otherwise. "Think not," said he, "that I am come to destroy the law." "I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."† In accordance with this declaration, an apostle says, "Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid! Yea, we establish the law."‡ The law therefore, is not repealed by the Gospel, but is still in full force. Consequently, all those who imagine that by the life and death of

* Rom. iii. 20. † Matt. v. 17. ‡ Rom. iii. 31.

Christ the moral law is abrogated, and that now they may, by an imperfect righteousness of their own—a sincere compliance with the forms enjoined in the Gospel, to which perchance, to remedy if necessary, possible deficiencies, is to be added the righteousness of Christ—be justified before God, will find themselves at last betrayed, and lost! You are not therefore justified by the law, nor by a sincere compliance with what may be supposed the forms of the Gospel of Christ.

The inquiry recurs. By what means do we obtain justification before God?

"A man," says Paul, "is not justified by the works of the law, but *by the faith of Jesus Christ*."* And "being *justified by faith*, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."† But in what sense? Not by faith as a meritorious agency to procure justification, but by faith as a medium through which it is bestowed. The faith demanded of you by the Gospel is not only to believe the testimony of God concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, but is also a reliance of soul upon his satisfaction for life and salvation. We are not justified *for* faith, as if it were of itself a sufficient righteousness, but by grace, *through* faith in Messiah. Those who believe in Christ, receive Christ, and faith is the act by which they receive him. It is the hand extended to take the gift which Jehovah freely bestows. The sole office of faith therefore, so far as justification is concerned, is to put us in possession of a righteousness by which we are accounted righteous. It is the receiving of Christ as presented in the Gospel. Salvation is, "of faith that it might be by grace."‡ Faith is therefore, characterized by a peculiarity which harmonizes with grace, and which looks not to itself, but to the Redeemer.

But was not faith counted to Abraham for righteousness? And if we believe, shall it not be accounted to us for right

* Gal. ii. 16. † Rom. v. 1. ‡ Rom. iv. 16.

eousness?* But are we to understand by these declarations of the apostle, that Abraham's faith constituted the meritorious righteousness for which he was justified? Surely not. God had given to him the promise that he should be the progenitor of Messiah, and although every indication seemed to forbid the hope of its fulfilment, yet he believed God, and his faith was, as ours will be under similar circumstances, productive of its full and legitimate results. It was "*accounted* to him for righteousness."

We are not, as you now see, justified either by works as an efficient cause, or by faith, as a meritorious agency; and yet we are not justified without both works, and faith. In the day of final accounts, all men, the righteous no less than the wicked, shall be *judged* by their works. "Behold," says Messiah, speaking of that day, "I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be."† "I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me." "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." "Come," "inherit the kingdom prepared for you."‡ Good works are the proof of pure religion, which never exists without them. For this reason works are referred to in the judgment, not as the grounds of claim, but as testimony of the existence of true faith, to which eternal life is promised, because it is the appointed means of your union with the Saviour. "Without faith," as well as works, "it is impossible to please him." "We are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins." "That he might be

* Rom. iv. 17–25. † Rev. xxii. 12. ‡ Matt. xxv. 36–46.

just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus."* The justification therefore, which God confers upon us is as we have said, *by* grace: it comes to us *through* faith as its medium; and faith always develops itself "in every good word and work." This clear and distinct statement of the whole subject by Paul, would seem to be *contradicted*, but is really *corroborated* and supported, by the exposition of the apostle James. "Was not Abraham our father," he asks, "justified by works when he had offered up his son Isaac upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? Likewise also, was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and sent them out another way?"† It is only necessary to understand the difference in the religious opinions of the two classes of persons addressed by the apostles, and the whole is perfectly understood. Those instructed by Paul, believed that they would be justified by works; that is, by compliance with the requirements of the law! This he shows them is impossible, and proceeds to prove that the favor in question was the gift of divine grace, through faith, and not by the deeds of the law. James was addressing those who relied upon faith alone, and that faith too unproductive of good works! Such a faith, he assures them, was dead, inoperative, of no value. So did not Abraham believe God, when he offered up his son Isaac upon the altar. So did not Rahab believe God, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way. Their faith was productive of works, and was thus made perfect. The tree is not made perfect without its appropriate fruit. Nor can faith be so regarded without those works which give it the necessary quality of entireness. Did Paul believe or teach that an inactive dead faith, was a competent medium of justification? Far from it. Nor did

* Rom. iii. 24-26. † James ii. 21-25.

James. They therefore perfectly agree that we are justified before God by grace, through faith, not a dead faith, but an active faith, that is made perfect by works of obedience, and holy living.

We next inquire into the meritorious cause of our justification.

This is found exclusively in the Redeemer. We have seen that the just and holy law of God, under which man was placed in the beginning, is still in full force and authority, and so must remain forever. So far from being repealed by the Gospel, it is repeated, and imperatively enforced. Its infinite claims must be satisfied. A perfect righteousness is alone adequate to this end. We are all offenders. We have no such righteousness. All our works fail. Our best efforts are powerless. Faith does not give the necessary conformity. How shall we obtain such a righteousness as is required to meet the demands of the law? God's word furnishes the answer. "By Jesus Christ, all that believe, are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses."* "He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification."† "Being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."‡ In these, and numerous similar passages, we are taught that the undeviating obedience, the amazing sufferings, and the agonizing death of the adorable Redeemer, constitute the righteousness on account of which we are justified. But since we are still sinners, and unholy, how can this righteousness become ours? Is such a thing possible? The doctrine of substitution before considered, casts a flood of light upon this otherwise obscure subject, and renders the whole entirely plain. Consider the great fact that in all Christ did upon earth, he acted as our representative! He took our place. He suffered in our stead. The acts of the representative, are the acts of the person represented, especially

* Acts xiii. 38, 39. † Rom. iv. 25. ‡ Rom. v. 9.

if confirmed by him. It is required of us imperatively, since what Christ did was mainly completed eighteen centuries ago, that we now ratify and assume it for ourselves. The acts of Christ become our acts, they enure to our benefit by faith, provided we now accept them. "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."* If we, in the manner which the Gospel prescribes, ratify his acts, they are really ours. In these considerations we have an answer to the question, since God "will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth,"† and "Christ died for all,"‡ why are the benefits of his satisfaction not effective for the salvation of all, but restricted to believers? All were represented, but all do not avow his acts of redemption. To be saved by him we must thus become voluntarily, a party in his sacrifice. We must receive Jesus Christ by faith. Do you decline, or what is the same thing, neglect to do this? You thereby disavow his acts, and reject his satisfaction. You stand apart from him, and upon your own merits, with all the demands of the law full upon you. You cannot be saved. Do you believe in Christ? You thereby ratify for yourself, his acts, are made a party in them, and enjoy all the blessings of his redemption. What Christ did, and suffered, every believer is, by a divine constitution, considered as having done and suffered. All believers are in Christ in a sense in some respects similar to that in which God is in Christ. "As thou Father," said he in his last prayer, "art in me, and I in thee, that *they* also may be one in us."§ When he obeyed the law, they obeyed the law; when he suffered and died for sin, they suffered and died for sin;

* Rom. viii. 3, 4.
† 1 Tim. ii. 3, 4.
‡ 2 Cor. v. 15.
§ John xvii. 2.

when he arose from the dead, they arose from the dead; and "because he lives, they live also." "The love of Christ constraineth us because we thus judge, that if one died for all then were all dead."* "He that is dead [with Christ] is freed from [the condemnation of] sin."† "If we be dead with Christ, [free from the curse of the law] we believe that we shall also live with him."‡ "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."§ So intimately, in his life, in his death, in his resurrection, and in his glorification, is each one of his people connected by faith, with the blessed Redeemer! Every true Christian can therefore, say with emphasis:—"I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."‖ The merits of Christ become ours, in such a way as by divine grace, to cleanse our consciences, secure our holiness, and obtain for us full and entire justification. Christ is the head, and his people are the members of the body. His life and spirit become the life and spirit of them all.

Some however, curiously inquiring, conclude, since nothing new occurs with God, that the justification of his people must have been eternal. Justification eternal! How can that be? Was it the purpose of God from eternity? But he had the same purpose with regard to their conversion and glorification. Now if his purpose to justify his people, is their justification, then his purpose to convert, and to glorify them, is their conversion and glorification. God has therefore, now no purposes. There is no such thing as conversion, nor will there be any future glorification! All religion is by such a theology, converted into abstractions, and becomes a mere dream of the imagination. The truth on this point is

* 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. † Rom. vi. 7. ‡ Rom. vi. 8.
§ Col. iii. 3, 4. ‖ Gal. ii. 20.

plain. The plan for the justification of his people was unquestionably fixed as the purpose of God, before the foundation of the world; this plan was executed in the life, the death, the resurrection, the ascension and intercession of Christ, "in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;" but the blessing is conferred and enjoyed only when the soul rests in the Redeemer. Such is the teaching of the divine word. If "while we were yet *sinners* Christ died for us, much more then, being *now justified* by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."* We were *formerly* sinners. We are "*now justified*." No man is authorized to conclude that he has received, or ever will receive, the blessing of justification, until he truly believes in our Lord Jesus Christ.

I have now made perhaps sufficiently apparent to you, the nature of justification, the medium through which it is conferred, the grounds upon which it is predicated, and the time when it is bestowed. Suffer me to refer to the practical influence of the doctrine upon the renewed mind.

1. Justification by the grace of God, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, while it fills the soul with humility, and a sense of dependence upon Jehovah, and is therefore, promotive of our growth in grace, supplies the strongest of all possible motives to a strict and hearty obedience.

He who toils to fulfil the law under the constant fear of destruction for his failures, may be truly ardent; so may the man who labors with the expectation that heaven is to be the reward of his own sacrifices and exertions; but *love* and *gratitude*, inspire the soul with infinitely higher emotions, and are incomparably more effective as impulses to action. To you the gift of eternal life is free. It is required only that with penitence, and humble gratitude, you receive the grace.

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* Rom. v. 1-9.

Yet on the part of Christ it has been gained for you, by the fulfilment of the original conditions of salvation. He met all the demands of divine law for you. The motive by which he urges you to obedience is characteristic:—"If ye love me, keep my commandments." Love is the sum and essence of religion. But if it does not evince itself in holy living, and obedience, it does not exist. In that soul is not the spirit of Christ. It was his delight to do the will of the Father. Every Christian inherits his spirit, and therefore delights to do his will. Thus you glorify God. Thus you honor Christ. Thus you enjoy the testimony of your own conscience that you are accepted of him.

2. The doctrine of justification by grace through faith, furnishes the most effectual of all restraints against sin.

Sin is alienation from God. It has been the cause of all your misery! Sin in you, a Christian, is nothing less than to "crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame!" What! *the Christian* sin in full view of the cross! Can it be that you willingly "trample thus upon the blood of Christ!" Into errors, and transgressions, you may be betrayed; but never into wilful, deliberate sin. The ingratitude is horrible! The justified soul hates sin. It appears to him dangerous in itself; a profane sporting with the groans and agony of the Redeemer.

3. Finally. What doctrine can inspire our hearts with love to God, and humble fervent gratitude, more effectually than that now submitted?

God smiles upon us. Jesus Christ has given himself for us. The Holy Spirit has cleansed our hearts, and dwells in our bosoms. Jehovah has declared us just and righteous; received us into his household; and made us the heirs of glory! Our hearts glow with heavenly love!

> "And is devotion virtue? 'Tis *compelled!*
> What heart of stone but glows at thoughts like these?"

SECTION III

BELIEVERS IN CHRIST ARE THE ADOPTED CHILDREN OF GOD.

Definition of adoption; original cause of adoption; conferred in our change of nature; we receive with it the spirit of adoption; God our Covenant Father; the family into which it introduces us; the eternal inheritance it confers.

FAITH in our Lord Jesus Christ, places us at once, in a new and most affecting relation to Jehovah. The believer is not only pardoned and justified, he is also *adopted*, and introduced into the family of God! A stranger and an alien from God no more, he has become a *son* and an *heir* of the Most High!

But are not *all* intelligent beings the sons of God? Angels, and men "are his offspring." He is their creator, their preserver, the great Father of all. His hand of goodness is ever extended, and he watches over them with paternal care and kindness. In what respect then, since all are his offspring, is your position higher, and happier, than that of others? *You* by the grace of God through the Redeemer, are delivered from the power, the dominion, and the curse of sin, and enjoy all the privileges of the Covenant of Grace, of which you are made a happy participant by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit. The same offers of divine blessing have in the Gospel, been made to others. The millions however, choose to remain rebels against Jehovah; to continue their transgressions; to live for the deceitful honors, the corroding wealth, the fading glories of this world! Your path though rugged, and steep, and laborious, leads to glory, immortality, eternal life. Theirs broad, and smooth, and flowery, skirted with sparkling joys, and gay delights, terminates in the dark abodes of eternal death!

How amazing the change which has occurred in your

character, your circumstances, and your prospects! Lately in common with all others, "in bondage, under the elements of the world;" you are now delivered! Indeed, you are more than delivered; you are made a child of God; an heir of heaven! Might we inquire what inducement has led Jehovah to confer upon you honors so high; blessings so distinguished? The answer is at hand. "God so *loved* the world that he gave his *only begotten Son*, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."* He was moved therefore, by his eternal and distinguishing love! His *love* was the effectual impulse! "Behold, what *manner* of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that *we* should be called the sons of God."† Blessed be *his* name, who "hath predestinated us unto *the adoption of children*, by Jesus Christ, unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace."‡ This surpassing benevolence he has exercised through his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, whom he "sent forth, born§ of a woman, *born* under the law, to redeem them that are under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."‖ Thus we trace as far as we are able, the divine motive in this great work. But after all our investigations, how little can we know on this subject! Why did God so love us? Why did the Redeemer feel for men an affection so ardent that the shame, and agony, and death of the cross could not for a moment, turn it aside? Who can answer? How profound! how sublime, how glorious the *mystery* of divine love!

"————Unexampled love!
Love nowhere to be found less than divine!"

You, at this point, naturally inquire, *how*, and *when, you receive* your *adoption?*

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* John iii. 16.
† 1 John iii. 1.
‡ Eph. i. 5.
§ γενομενον.
‖ Gal. iv. 4, 5.

Not evidently until you are "*born of God*," do you actually become "the son of God." You receive this blessing therefore, in the renewal of your nature, by the Holy Ghost. The same act which pardons your sins, and justifies you before God, invests you with the privileges of the sons of God. "*Now*," says an apostle, "are we the sons of God;"* *now*, that Jehovah has put his laws into our minds, and written them in our hearts; *now* that he has become our covenant God, and made us his peculiar people, whose sins, and whose iniquities he will remember no more;† *now* are we the sons of God. When the "*new nature*" is imparted, the "*new name*" is given, by which Jehovah distinguishes his children; for "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."‡ The regeneration of the Holy Spirit, restores the likeness of God in our nature, and adoption gives us a place as the sons of God in his family. "As many as received him to them gave he *the privilege*§ to become the *sons* of God, even to them that *believe* on his name, who were *born*, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but *of God*."‖ By regeneration we are received into the divine favor. By adoption we are clothed with the divine honor. The former prepares us to enjoy salvation. The latter places us in possession of the glorious inheritance. "Therefore," well did an apostle say, "all things [since they belong to Jehovah your Father] are yours. Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."**

At the same time with your adoption into the family of God, *you receive also the spirit of adoption.*

"Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of

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* 1 John iii. 2.
‡ Rom. viii. 14.
‖ John i. 12, 13.
† Heb. viii. 8–12.
§ εξουσια.
** 1 Cor. iii. 21, 23.

his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father."* The *spirit of adoption!* What is this but the spirit of love; the spirit of confidence; the spirit of prayer; the spirit of obedience? The spirit of *love*—supreme, prevailing, abiding love, to our Heavenly Father; the spirit of *confidence*—in his infinite goodness, his providential care, his sure promises, his wise administration; of *prayer*—prompting us to approach him, not with the presumption of hypocrites, nor with the cold indifference of formalists, but with the assurance of unwavering faith, and with the warmth of filial affection, to commune with him, to make known to him our desires, to express our gratitude, and to pour into his ear our anxieties and sorrows; of *obedience*—prompt, cheerful, constant, universal, to his commandments, "esteeming all his precepts concerning all things to be right, and hating every false way." The spirit of adoption! From it we also derive assured evidence of our gracious state. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God."† Yes, it is the Holy Spirit who so disposes our hearts, that we are enabled to embrace the Gospel promises, and obtain from them the supports they were designed to give. By *his* influence it is that we exercise "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, temperance, faith," and thus maintain a character in consonance with our high station. Thus is brought into being in our hearts the spirit of adoption, and we are prepared to adore and trust our Heavenly Father, not alone when prosperity smiles upon us, when his providences are bright, and cheerful, but also in the darkest storms of life, and amidst the most desolating tempests of sorrow and disappointment. The hope which sustains the heart; the delight which springs up in the bosom; the gentle refreshing from the divine throne bestowed

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* Gal. iv. 6

† Rom. viii. 16.

by the Holy Ghost, develop themselves through the medium of the spirit of adoption!

And God is our Father! Delightful truth! Endeared name! Father! How affecting and animating the considerations which at its bare utterance, spring forth and come thickly clustering like angels, about the soul! "I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons, and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."* It is the authorized language of devotion, since in the prayers we offer, our Saviour teaches us to address the great Eternal as "Our Father in heaven."† The God of heaven and earth is our Father. Assuming this title, *our Father*, he would teach us, that he cherishes towards us, his helpless and dependent children, the tenderest love; that he watches over us with unwearied care; that in every event which concerns our happiness, our prosperity, our salvation, his wisdom directs; that his goodness is unfailing; that he is ever near to succor and protect; and that he will never leave nor forsake us! All things are his, and he is ready to bestow them! His arm is omnipotent, and he will defend and keep us! To you, his confiding child, the dread majesty of Jehovah is softened into a benignancy which authorizes, and invites to a holy familiarity with him! I am lost in the immensity of this thought. Who can adequately describe the boundless magnitude, and excellency, of the blessings contained in this *single fact*, that God is our Father!

Still more. *Adoption* as the Children, *makes us members of the family of God.*

This great family is now, partly upon earth, and partly in heaven. It is however, all one. Referring to his solicitude in behalf of those still in their probationary state, and his desires for their highest spiritual prosperity, an apostle says: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our

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* 2 Cor. vi. 18. † Matt. vi. 9.

Lord Jesus Christ, of whom *the whole family in heaven and earth* is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man."* The "whole family" is "in heaven and earth." *You* belong at present, to that part which is upon earth, and known as his Church, with which in virtue of your adoption, it is your privilege, and your duty, to be associated. How much to be commiserated is that wayward child, who from want of information, from errors in judgment, or from any other cause, wanders away from the family with which to be so intimately connected, is attended with blessings so numerous and important! Spiritual poverty, and wretchedness are the necessary results of such isolation, since only "those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God." His children upon earth, united, obedient, "walking in all his commandments and ordinances," honor him among men, exalt his truth, and as their happy reward, enjoy his smiles, the light of his countenance, the gracious visitations of his Spirit, until *they* shall go up to join the family of their Father above, in their own glorious celestial home.

Contemplate now for a moment this exalted family, when all its at present scattered members shall be united on high.

First in dignity and honor, is Jesus Christ himself, the Eternal, the only begotten! He, our adored Redeemer, our blessed Mediator, and Advocate, is of our number, "the first-born among many brethren," partaking with us of a common nature! The immaculate, the Infinite Messiah, is "not ashamed to call us brethren." He claims his place in the family of the saints! Look again. In that shining band you see mingling other bright beings, resplendent and holy intelligences, who, having retained their original purity and fidelity, have uninterruptedly enjoyed the honor and happi-

* Eph. iii. 14-20.

ness of their first state. They are angels of all ranks, and of all orders, the glowing myriads of "celestial ardors," "Cherubim, and Seraphim," "Thrones, Dominions, and Powers." These also are our *brethren!* To them all we are united by adoption. There also are the great men, of various ages, whose holy renown has adorned the sacred pages, and whose names are dear equally to hoary age and lisping infancy, the patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles, the martyrs! And *all the saints* are there. They have been graciously rescued from earth, and introduced into the fellowship, and society of the most exalted beings in the universe! John, in vision, saw, and describes this glorious family. "I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds and people and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and with palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." And "the *angels* stood round about the throne, and about the elders, and the four '*living ones*,'* and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God forever and ever, Amen." But "who are these arrayed in white robes, and whence come they?" A throng, bright, majestic, glorious! They "have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night, in his temple. And he that sitteth upon the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more; neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall

* ζωα.

wipe away all tears from their eyes."* Behold the great and incomparable family into which *you* are brought by adoption! They are Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant; the glowing spirits that minister near the throne of the Eternal; and the happy men upon whom his hand has impressed the image of his unspeakable perfection!

Such is adoption, considered in reference to the original cause of the distinction it confers; the change of your nature in which it is received; the spirit of adoption which accompanies it; and the glorious family of which it constitutes you an honored member. I will add in conclusion, that your adoption as the children of God *includes the right of inheritance in the kingdom of eternal glory.*

"Thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."† "Ye are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."‡ As a child of God, an inheritance awaits you, the gift of your Father. And what is it? Survey it. Mark the inventory! Glory, and honor, and happiness, and immortal life; "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." All is yours! It is enough! Not yet however, have you reached your majority. You are still for a season, "under tutors, and governors." "The time appointed by the Father" has not come when you shall receive the full inheritance. You are still upon earth, battling your way through foes, and fears, "faint, yet pursuing." You have *now* however, an *earnest.* Even *this* is surpassingly rich, above all earthly possessions and joys! Is it a "*foretaste*" only? Still it purifies, it exalts, it ennobles the soul! It fills your bosoms with "the peace of God which passeth all understanding."

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* Rev. vii, 9–17. † Gal. iv. 6, 7. ‡ Rom. viii. 15–17.

while strong faith carries you forward in anticipation to your future home, amidst the ranks of glorious harpers above. Is all this but the *earnest* of "better things!" Is the excellency of the things *themselves* yet to be revealed? What must be the full possession, the stupendous reality! Eloquence cannot describe it; thought utterly fails to grasp it; IT IS HEAVEN!

SECTION IV.

BELIEVERS IN CHRIST RECEIVE ALL THE BLESSINGS SET FORTH IN THE PROMISES OF GOD.

Nature of the promises; those pertaining to spiritual good belong only to believers; their conditions, and agencies; certainty of fulfilment.

A PROMISE is a declaration made by one person to another, which binds the person who makes it to do or to forbear certain actions. The promises *of God* are the annunciations of his word, in which he pledges himself to bestow specified blessings upon his people. These gracious expressions assure us, on the one hand, of exemption from injuries, and on the other, are a firm guaranty of positive favor, and blessing. Of the promises of God the converse are his *threatenings*. In these he denounces his displeasure against all transgression, and asserts his unchanging purpose to punish every sin. He "will render to every man according to his deeds. To them who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but

obey unrighteousness, indignation, and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil."* It will therefore, be seen that both the promises, and the threatenings of God, in their nature, pledge him to a specified course of action towards every man. Whether this course will be marked by his favor or his wrath, must necessarily be determined by the character of each individual. And that none may be ignorant of the laws which will, in all cases, govern his administration, they are in "the living oracles," fully revealed, and amply illustrated, and explained.

With this exposition of the promises before us, who, we proceed to inquire, in the first place, is entitled to receive the blessings they offer?

God has promised to bestow, and does bestow, perpetually, favors innumerable, and unspeakably rich, upon *all* his creatures. Of those however which pertain to salvation in the world to come, it is expressly declared in his word, that they are "Given to them that believe."† Yet so far as the good things of this world are concerned, little difference is observable between the friends of the Redeemer and others. All share in his benedictions. The light of heaven shines, and the showers, and dews, descend alike upon the just and the unjust. Joy sparkles in the eye, health mantles upon the cheek, prosperity pours her treasures into the lap, and quietness and security are in the dwellings of the wicked, as well as those of the righteous. "Jehovah openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing." He "feeds the young ravens when they cry." He provides for the prowling denizens of the forests. He clothes the skies in brightness, and the fields in beauty. "Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Heavenly Father." He has given indiscriminately, the assurance that, "While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and

* Rom. ii. 6–9. † Gal. iii. 21, 22.

summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease."* Nor do his mercies terminate here. "To every creature" defiled by sin, the Gospel, by his command, is preached. To each who will repent and believe, offers are made of deliverance, and eternal life! Here is infinite goodness! Here is abounding grace! But the multitudes, in love with vanity, and regardless of God, refuse to turn from their sins, and will not seek salvation! "They desire not the knowledge of his ways." Upon all such, notwithstanding temporal favors, abides by a necessity arising from the unalterable constitution of things, the curse of God. Solemnly and fearfully comes from his throne the declaration, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them."† No other medium is instituted through which spiritual and eternal blessings can reach the hearts of men, but faith in the Redeemer. Salvation "is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end the promise might be sure."‡ Of what value therefore, are promises in the absence of faith? How can those who are willingly ignorant of these divine declarations, or who do not believe them, place upon them any reliance whatever? What impulse to action, what foundation for hope, what support amidst the toils and sufferings of life, do they yield to persons of this class? They inspire no confidence, they are no fountain of blessing, they pass by such as the idle wind. Believers only are entitled to receive the spiritual and eternal blessings held out in the promises of God.

Consider in the second place, their magnitude, their extent, their boundless excellency.

Contemplating them in their richness, and various bearings upon the condition and prospects of the redeemed, Peter exclaims:—"Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ our

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* Gen. viii. 22. † Gal. iii. 10. ‡ Rom. iv. 16.

Lord; according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."* The promises which bear to us in anticipation all these blessings, are indeed, "*great* and *precious*." They are priceless gems sparkling with heavenly light, shining on every page of his blessed word! Over the whole field of Christian life they cast a glowing radiance! Nor are they bounded by earthly limits. They extend beyond the grave, and assure you of unspeakable and everlasting glory in the world to come! The eye of faith rests no where but there are "great and precious promises" to cheer and animate you! They distinctly hold out to your acceptance whatever you can imagine as necessary for your safety in life, your preparation for the paradise of God, or your sure guidance to the glories of heaven. No dangers beset, no wants arise, no temptations assail, no afflictions befall you, in which you do not find the promises inviting you to lean securely upon the divine arm, where you must be triumphantly sustained. He who is infinite in wisdom and goodness, has designed them to meet all your wants, and he has adapted the blessings they offer, to every condition in life in which you can possibly be placed. To the heart sinking in the midst of sorrow, they bring joy, and thanksgiving; they pour upon the soul that is in darkness, the light of the divine countenance: they console the chamber of disease; they bring gladness into the abodes of poverty; in perplexity they guide, and in disappointment they renew your confidence and strength; they cast a halo of brightness upon your expiring pillow; are like ministering spirits as

* 2 Pet. i. 2–4.

you pass through the dark valley, and shadow of death; and they welcome you into the presence of an approving God, with the rapturous plaudit, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." "God is no respecter of persons." His promises therefore, bring equal delight to all believers, whatever may be their social position, or their relations in the present life. Liberally, generously, are they bestowed upon the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the free and the bond, the learned and the unlearned. "All are one in Christ Jesus," and equal participants in his blessings. The possession of heaven itself, so perfectly is every favor included in them, is represented simply, as *inheriting the promises*. Commending to us the example of glorified saints who have preceded us in the Christian life, Paul says:—"We desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end; that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises."* How unspeakably glorious is this inheritance! Compared with it, all earthly possessions are mean and contemptible, "less than nothing, and vanity." How wondrous, how excellent, how boundless are the promises of God!

That you may not err in understanding and applying the promises of God, and thus bring upon yourself much disappointment and affliction, it is, I remark in the third place, important that you exercise a wise discrimination. Do not rush into needless dangers to put Jehovah to the proof, whether he will deliver you: nor confound in your interpretations of the promises, persons and circumstances; do not imagine that their fulfilment is to be attended by no afflictive events; and never lose sight of the conditions upon which they are predicated, nor of the agencies to be employed in their accomplishment.

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* Heb. vi. 11, 12.

Feel you a perverse inclination needlessly to test the faithfulness of God? Yielding to some ruling impulse, do you wickedly run into sins, and snares of the adversary? Where in such cases, is the promise that you shall be saved from lasting injury? There is no such promise. Your dreamy imaginings, are not the promises of God! He has never pledged himself to meet your extravagant and inconsistent expectations, much less the wild vagaries of your fancy. Rush you headlong, into the jaws of the lion, and presume that Jehovah is bound miraculously to change his nature, or restrain his savage disposition, to confer eclat upon you, or to save you from the evils you have so rashly provoked? On the contrary, he has solemnly warned you against all such presumption. "Watch, and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." And further. It is possible that the promises of God may be *abused* in yet other forms, indeed prostituted to the most censurable ends. How often are they adduced by wicked men either to justify themselves, to lead you astray, or for other equally unholy purposes! In fact they have sometimes been employed even by Satan himself! When standing on a pinnacle of the temple, he thus addressed the adorable Saviour:—"If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down; for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." Mark the answer *he* received. "Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."* Do you, in some similar manner, "tempt the Lord your God?" Dare you venture thus to subject his faithfulness to a needless trial; and that too, either in compliance with suggestions from the arch destroyer, or to gratify your own perverse vanity? Will Jehovah, under such circumstances, submit to your caprices, and thus encourage your

* Matt. iv. 6, 7.

violation of his commandments? "*Thou* shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Your purposes must be holy; your affections and desires subdued to his will; your life must be conformed to his word; then the complete and perfect fulfilment of every promise pertaining to you, is assuredly certain.

It is further requisite that in your interpretation of the promises, you carefully avoid the confounding of persons and circumstances. Can those divine declarations pledging *miraculous* support to prophets, apostles, and others, apply ordinarily to you? If, for illustration, Messiah instructed his disciples, when to answer for their adherence to the Gospel, they were dragged before the rulers and kings of the earth, not to premeditate their defences, adding the *promise* that in all such exigencies, *he* would stand by them, and give them "a mouth and wisdom that all their enemies should not be able to gainsay or resist," shall ministers, or others, now, when about to address their congregations, not premeditate the instructions to be imparted? If they do not, are they justified by any such promises as these, in supposing that they will be supernaturally endowed with resistless wisdom and eloquence? These, and such like applications of the promises, are perversions of God's word, and can terminate only in disappointment and shame. Ministers are, as was Timothy, admonished "to give themselves to *reading*;" to "*study*, to show themselves approved unto God, workmen who need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." And they, and all other Christians, are instructed to "search the scriptures," to "be vigilant," to "be circumspect," in all things seeking to know, and to obey the truth. When thus engaged in the service of God, according to his word, the promises to his ancient saints, *in like circumstances*, are legitimately applicable to you. God said to Joshua, and the armies of Israel, when about to take the field against the nations of Canaan—a dangerous and arduous enterprise—"I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."

This promise to them, is equally a promise to you, if as they were, you are seeking intelligently, to do the will of God. Of this fact it is sufficient evidence, that Paul adduces the declaration in question for the encouragement of the Hebrew Christians, to whom no less than to their fathers, he assures them, Jehovah says :—"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."* Wherein therefore, your circumstances are *similar to those* of ancient saints, and in no others, you may rightfully apply to yourself the promises made personally to them, and God will unfailingly recognize and approve the appropriation.

Suffer me, also, to guard you against the involuntary impression which I find not unfrequently existing, that the fulfilment of God's promises will be attended by no circumstances which are at present afflictive.

When all things wear the aspect of peace, and prosperity, and joy, you easily imagine that Jehovah smiles, and you can surely rely upon the divine favor; but when storms lower and darkness gathers about your path, you are faithless and despondent. In both these respects, you may very possibly labor under misapprehensions. The smoothest seas often conceal the most dangerous rocks. "Not among the gauds, and pomps, and pleasures, of this fleeting world is thy vocation. Thy deep vow denies to hoard its wealth, or truckle for its smile, or bind its blood-stained laurels on thy brow!" These all may prove to you blasting and mildew. Nor are distresses and sorrows certain evidences of the divine displeasure. How profound was the affliction of the venerable Jacob, when Joseph, and Simeon were torn from his embraces, and he was trembling for the safety of his beloved Benjamin! In deep agony of soul he exclaimed, "All these things are against me." So much pain could, he imagined, portend nothing less than the frowns of God. The facts

* Heb. xiii. 5.

however, were far otherwise. These very events were indispensable links in the chain of divine providences by which his promises of blessings to the family of Jacob were to be accomplished.

> "Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
> But trust him for his grace."

Your ultimate advantage may demand much severity of discipline. If so, afflictions no less than prosperity, are an expression on the part of your Father in heaven of kindness and love.

Another consideration of the last importance on this subject is, that you never lose sight of the *conditions* upon which the promises are predicated.

A very few are without conditions; such, for example, as that by which Jehovah pledged his Son to redeem us; and that which secures the ultimate introduction of the Gospel among all nations. But nearly all the promises are conditional. "*Ask*, and ye shall receive; *seek*, and ye shall find; *knock*, and it shall be opened unto you." Those who do not comply with the conditions of the promises, can never receive the blessings which the promises propose. "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."* A failure to comply with the conditions is in fact, a cancelling of the promise. Than this no truth is more obvious. It is a principle universally recognized, in all transactions among men, no less than in the religion of Christ. I bind myself to pay you a designated sum, for a specified article of property. But unless the property is delivered to me, I am under no obligation to pay the money. Indeed, than to require it, nothing would be more unjust. Has the great God attached conditions to his promises, and will he, can he, abandon them? To do

* James i. 25.

so would neither be honorable to him, nor advantageous to you. Do not therefore, I entreat you, presume that any promise belongs to you, or indeed, continues to bear even the lineaments of a promise, the conditions of which you have not performed.

Nearly allied to the conditions upon which the promises rest, are the *agencies* by which they are accomplished.

The conditions, as we have seen, have reference to the persons themselves who are to be benefited. The agencies are either the direct divine power, unseen but omnipotent, or that efficiency which is mediate, or through human instrumentality. God has promised that the nations shall be converted to Christ. Messiah must,

> "—— Added to his many crowns,
> Receive yet *one*, the crown of all the earth."

"From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place, incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering. For my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts."* And again. "All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn to the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee."† On the round earth, error shall have no place, no passion touch a discordant string, but all be harmony and love! By what agency is this glorious result to be gained? By the universal dissemination simply, of the knowledge of Christ. God has promised that men shall be saved, and that his Churches shall be established in every land. By what means are all these things to be done? The agency ordained is the preaching of the Gospel. His people must therefore, employ the appropriate instrumentalities. And then, and then only, will they receive strength, and comfort, and the cause of salvation, as he has promised, triumphantly

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* Mal. i. 11. † Ps xxii. 27.

prevail. The means and the ends, in every department of his great and gracious purposes, are by the divine ordination, indissolubly connected.

It is often, however, necessary, for your own profit, and for the benefit of others, that your fidelity shall be tested. God has for this end, in most cases, withheld from you a knowledge of the time and the circumstances in which his promises of blessing shall be fulfilled.

Are his promises *applicable* to you? Have their *conditions* been performed? Have the required *instrumentalities* been employed? Their fulfilment is absolutely certain. Not indeed, when, and how, you in your own mind may perhaps, have determined. They are not on account of your want of particular information, the less sure. "I believe God," said an ancient saint, "that it shall be even as it was told me." Your faith must be of the same firm and steady character. And further. If as in the case of Abraham, appearances seem to be against you, must you cease to believe? How soon can Jehovah change the whole aspect of things! "Now, for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith being much more precious than that of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Christ."* Thus taught the apostle of the circumcision. James adds:—"The trying of your faith worketh patience," the design of which is that, "ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."† The process of the lapidary is violent, yet no other means exist by which can be brought out the beauty and brilliancy of the diamond. So painful, but beneficial, may be the providences through which you are called to pass. Thus were tried patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and saints of every age. Thus must you also be tried! "Be [therefore,] strong in the Lord, and in

* 1 Pet. i. 6, 7. † James i. 2, 3.

the power of his might." "Draw near [to God] with a true heart, in full assurance of faith," and "hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering, for he is faithful that promised."* "In due season we shall reap if we faint not."† By his own voluntary act, he has given you a right of claim. Your confidence therefore, rests upon the most immovable of all foundations, the veracity of the Eternal God.

The promises of men, I remark in conclusion, may fail for several reasons. The events of the future are concealed from them. They cannot certainly know whether they will have the ability to comply with the obligations into which they have entered. They may earnestly desire to do so, but have no power. Possibly their inclinations may change, and they may refuse. But no such uncertainties attach to Jehovah. Are you faithful? How then, can his promises fail? He is omniscient, and knows necessarily, every occurrence which can possibly arise. With every scene of earth in full view he has deliberately recorded his promises. He is omnipotent. He does all his pleasure, in heaven and upon earth. He is changelessly the same forever. From the very nature of God, it cannot be that he should fail to perform his promises. His own language on this subject is explicit. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away."‡ He has given us more than his simple promises; he has added the declaration that nothing shall turn him aside from his purpose to fulfil them all! He has gone further still! "God willing *more abundantly* to show unto the heirs of *promise* the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an *oath*, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us."§ Who then, with his promises

* Heb. x. 22, 23.
† Gal. vi. 9.
‡ Matt. xxiv. 35.
§ Heb. vi. 17, 18.

pledged, his subsequent declarations that they shall be redeemed, and finally his oath that not one of them shall fail, can doubt? But there is yet another pledge, to the heart of the devoted believer more affecting than all others. In this pledge an appeal is made directly to "*dying love.*" "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"*

> "A faithful, and unchanging God,
> Lays the foundations of my hope
> In oaths, and promises, and blood."

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* Rom. viii. 32.

SECTION V.

BELIEVERS IN CHRIST ARE ANIMATED AND SUSTAINED BY THE POWER OF HOPE.

Nature of hope; its objects; its foundation; its connection with faith, and the work of the Spirit; its relation to the promises; its associations; its degrees of strength.

AMONG the many privileges extended to believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, not the least distinguished is *the hope of salvation and eternal life.* "Our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and *good hope* through grace, [thus fervently prays an apostle] comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work."* Such hope he has given freely to all his children, by the animating power of which they are sustained throughout all their earthly pilgrimage. Hope, I remark as to its nature, is not a *simple* exercise of the mind, but a combination of *desire, and expectation.* Desire for an object does not create hope, unless we can persuade ourselves into some confidence that we shall gain that object; nor is hope produced by the expectation of any thing not desired, since in such circumstances the mind experiences a feeling not of hope, but of repugnance. It is also necessary to the nature of hope that the object be good, at least in our own estimation. We may expect evil, and fear it, but we never can hope for it. Hope therefore, is always associated with joyous emotions, more or less intense. Anxieties will attend hope to the same extent that our desires for the object are ardent, and our confidence of securing it is mingled with apprehensions of failure. The moment we are convinced that it cannot be attained,

* 2 Thess. ii. 16, 17

hope in relation to it ceases to exist. If the object appear to us of little importance, our desires will be faint, and however confident may be our expectations, the joy of our hope will be a feeble emotion. It is further necessary to observe in relation to hope, that it always looks to the future. That which is either already lost, or is actually in our possession, never can excite hope. "We are saved by hope; but hope that is *seen* [enjoyed] is not hope: for what a man seeth why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience, wait for it."* It is, as you now perceive, essential to the nature of hope that the object be in the future, that you believe it to be good, that you desire it, and that you expect to obtain it. The exercise of mind produced by this condition of things is usually and correctly denominated hope.

In many important respects hope is the same whether it relates to things temporal or spiritual. In either case, however, men are strongly indisposed to analyze its character, and therefore often hope without any intelligent reason, and indeed, in many instances where, if consulted, both reason and intelligence would forbid its admission. *The man of the world* pursues all its desired objects with ever clinging hope. His path of life is dark and rugged, but he hopes it will soon be more bright and pleasant. Wealth, honors, pleasures, fly at his approach, but he follows them still. Others have gained them, and why may not he? A vague and mysterious influence invigorates the soul in adversity with new strength, nerves men to meet dangers, endure labors, and overcome discouragements; and gives them perseverance to buffet the thousand storms that overtake them on life's tempestuous sea. True, all may be delusion. Every fondly cherished anticipation may deceive them. Still they toil continually onward.

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* Rom. viii. 24, 25.

"Hope springs immortal in the human breast;
Man never *is* but always *to be* blest."

Of the same character also are the hopes of many *religionists*. They *desire* to escape condemnation, and to obtain future happiness, and they create in their own mind the *expectation* of obtaining their *object* by false notions of the *character of God*, of his word, and of themselves! God is infinitely good. From his great benevolence they conclude that although they remain in their sins, they may hope to escape the wrath to come, forgetting that Jehovah is also just and righteous, and that he has distinctly said, "The wicked shall be turned into hell."* "If the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him, God also bearing them witness both with signs, and wonders, and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost."† Some mistake the *word of God* in various ways, deriving from it a system of religion destitute of Christ and holiness, and upon such baseless theory found their hopes of salvation! This deception is encouraged by the modern opinion, so popular in many quarters, that it is not material what a man's religion may be, provided he entertain it with perfect sincerity. Others mistake their own true character. They are honest. They are honorable. They comply with the Gospel forms. They confidently expect therefore, to be saved! Intermingled with these are other and multitudinous errors, upon some one or other of which, as upon treacherous sand, the millions have built the citadel of their hopes. Every such hope, however confidently maintained, when the trial comes, must utterly fail.

The question may however arise, whether such false hopes

Ps. ix. 17. † Heb. ii. 2–4.

afford to those who entertain them, that sense of security which through life, and in death, will be satisfactory. That they do, if the deceitfulness of their foundation remains undiscovered, is unquestionable. In all cases, in which the theories entertained, no matter how preposterous, or baseless, are sincerely embraced, and firmly believed, the hopes they inspire are unaltering. The honest Mohammedan, or Pagan, is doubtless, though his hope is destitute of that divine elevation, and holy peace, which swell the Christian bosom, as firm and unmoved in his confidence, as the most devoted and intelligent follower of the Redeemer. Let the falsehoods upon which hope is based but be firmly believed, and it will bear its votary onward triumphantly. Eternity alone will reveal to him his fatal deception. Like the false lights held out to ships at sea, to decoy the unsuspecting mariners upon the rocks of death, so these false hopes deceive those who trust in them, until they are engulfed in eternal destruction!

But we turn to more pleasant considerations, and will contemplate a moment, the *objects* of your hope.

They are *not*, permit me to remind you, the pardon of sins. This boon has already been conferred. Nor are they the purification of your nature by the Spirit; nor indeed, any other of the blessings you now possess. What then are they? I answer, they are *your happy admission, when you shall leave this world, into the kingdom and joys of our Lord Jesus Christ; a glorious resurrection from the dead, and the reunion of your perfected soul and body; a gracious acquittal in the presence of an assembled world in the judgment of the last day; holiness and immortality, beyond the reach of evil; and everlasting happiness with saints and angels in heaven!* These are the objects of your hope. You ardently *desire* them. Of this there can be no question. Do you *expect* them? What are your *reasons* for this expectation? At this point the character of your hope, whether it is true or

false, must be determined. Hence the imperative obligation of the apostolic admonition:—"Be ready always, to give an answer to every man that asketh you, a *reason* of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."*

You hope to attain to these unspeakably glorious results, because, in the first place, Jesus Christ died for sinners, and you a lost sinner, believe in him. "If we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him." "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. So shall we ever be with the Lord."† This is declared by divine inspiration to be a "*good hope*," given you "through grace," and fitted to "comfort your heart;" indeed to "establish you," and give you "everlasting consolation."‡ Such hope is perpetually nourished, strengthened, and perfected, by the word of God. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we, through patience, and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope."§ But the word of God, so intimately are faith and hope connected, cannot produce this result, unless when correctly understood, fully believed, and cordially embraced. "We wait for the hope of righteousness by faith."‖ And "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in *hope* of the glory of God."**

The hope of the Christian is, in the second place, neces-

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* 1 Pet. iii. 15.
† 1 Thess. iv. 14–17.
‡ 2 Thess. ii. 16.
§ Rom. xv. 4.
‖ Gal. v. 5.
** Rom. v. 1, 2.

sarily connected with the work of the Holy Spirit in his regeneration, and sanctification.

That *heaven* has been prepared for you, is not enough. *You* also must be prepared for heaven. Such is the teaching of an apostle, who thus utters his ardent thanksgiving:—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time."* To a true hope you are therefore, begotten by the Spirit of God. Thus only, as we have seen, are we qualified, and made capable of heaven, and therefore, "Through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness."† The hope of the Gospel can animate none but the renewed heart.

In the third place, your hope has necessarily direct relation to the *promises* of God.

What has he promised to do hereafter for you? Has he not pledged *every* blessing of *possible* necessity? "The Lord God is a sun, and shield: the Lord will give grace, and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."‡ What more is wanting? You rest unmoved, in the "hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began," and "unto which promise we hope to come." Have you indeed, "passed from death unto life?" Has a personal application to you been made by the Holy Spirit, of all that God has done for the redemption, the sanctification, and the salvation of sinners? Do you understand, unwaveringly believe, and act upon his most holy word? Then your hope is true, sure, indestructible.

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* 1 Peter i. 3–5. † Gal. v. 5. ‡ Ps. lxxxiv. 11.

The *relations* of that hope by which you are sustained, are of the most interesting character. It dwells only in a pure heart: is always associated with assiduous, practical religion; and leans exclusively upon our Lord Jesus Christ. Let these considerations be meditated more at large.

The true Christian hope can dwell only in a pure heart. How can it be otherwise? The corrupt, and unholy, look for salvation! They *may*, if they suffer themselves to be deceived regarding its nature and conditions. Those who are misled with respect to the means by which earthly blessings are obtained, and without adequate reasons, are confident and joyous in the hope of receiving them, always excite our commiseration. We lament alike their errors in judgment, and the pain that must attend the destruction of their cherished anticipations. How much more deeply should we deplore the condition of those whose eternal life hangs thus suspended upon false conceptions, and are in such danger of being forever lost! Does your hope permit you to be careless of God, and indifferent regarding your spiritual progress? Does it consist with worldliness of mind, and an unsanctified disposition? Then it is beyond question deceitful, and will surely fail you in the dread day of trial! "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And *every man* that hath this hope in him [the hope of bearing the image, and enjoying the glory, of Jesus Christ in heaven] *purifieth* himself, even as he is pure."* He perseveres, in other words, in the state of purity into which he has been brought by divine grace, abstaining from all evil, and avoiding every defilement. All such earnestly seek to keep themselves in the love of God, and may therefore hope for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

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* 1 John iii. 2, 3.

A true Christian hope is always associated with assiduous practical religion.

It supports you under every trial, and impels you to the performance of duty. It is thus beautifully grouped with other Christian graces, by divine inspiration itself:—"We glory in tribulation also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."* Such hope never can subject you to shame, because it has for its foundation God's goodness, and truth. Your own experience in your Christian course, bears testimony to its sustaining power. You have been subjected to sufferings on account of your attachment to the Saviour, but you have been enabled to glory in them all. They have served but to try your sincerity, and firmness, and have demonstrated still more fully the goodness of God. Since he has supported you through the past, you have reason to hope that he will support you through the future. Come then, tribulations, come what will, they will all prove but the means of your advancement in holiness, and the divine life. "All things work together for good to them that love God." These results find their sure guaranty in "the love of God shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost." This is the spring of all your actions; the motive of your obedience; the principle that assimilates you to Christ. It is the love of God which consumes all that is unholy in your nature; refines every passion, and appetite; leads you to every good word and work; and while it produces in you the mind that was in Christ, it clothes you with ability to obey the law of God, since now you love him with all your soul, and mind, and strength, and your neighbor as yourself.

Hope also, leans exclusively upon our Lord Jesus Christ.

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* Rom. v. 3–5.

Every other foundation is delusive. This is immovable. Such a hope can never be disappointed. In the soul where it dwells heaven has already begun to exist, and shall be gloriously perfected.

> Here is firm footing; here is solid rock;
> This can support us; all is sea besides;
> Sinks under us; bestorms, and then devours."

Finally, the hope of the Christian, is of different degrees of strength. If your desires for such a heaven as the Bible reveals are faint, or if your expectations of receiving it are mingled with many misgivings and fears, your hope will be feeble. In proportion as these desires grow strong, your hope will increase in power and energy. Paul prayed for the Romans that they might "abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost;"* and for the Hebrews, that they might "show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end."† Whether your hope will be feeble and flickering, or abound in power and energy; whether it will be ever faltering and hesitating, or firm and assured; must depend, with the blessing of God, in no small degree, upon your knowledge of divine things, your faith in Christ, your devotion of heart, and the assiduity with which you walk in all the commandments, and ordinances of God. It is your privilege to enjoy a hope stronger than death, and triumphant over every assault of the powers of darkness.

Such I understand to be the nature of hope; its objects; the foundation upon which it rests; its connection with faith, and the work of the Spirit; its relation to the promises of God; its influences; and the degrees of strength with which it is developed; "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure, and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil, whither (Jesus) the forerunner is

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* Rom. xv. 13. † Heb. vi. 11.

for us entered." Amidst all the storms, and tempests of life, it gives us serenity, confidence, and repose.

> "A *Christian* dwells, like Uriel, in the sun;
> Meridian evidence puts doubt to flight;
> And ardent *hope* anticipates the skies."

SECTION VI.

THE PRIVILEGES OF BELIEVERS IN CHRIST INCLUDE THEIR PERSEVERANCE IN GRACE UNTO THE ATTAINMENT OF FINAL AND COMPLETE SALVATION.

Preliminary observations; objections against the doctrine of final perseverance considered; arguments in proof of its truth; conclusion.

To persevere in grace unto the attainment of final, and complete salvation, is another, and the last in the catalogue which I shall at present particularly consider, of the inestimable privileges growing out of the union of believers with Christ. I need not tell you that a result so glorious will not be achieved without a struggle. The utmost energies of minds renewed and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, will be imperatively demanded. Battles are to be fought; victories are to be won; labors are to be endured before the end is gained.

> "——— Not for thee
> Spreads the world her downy pillow;
> On the rock thy couch must be,
> While around thee chafes the billow."

But in every struggle, every conflict, Jehovah is your guide and support, and has promised that you shall be "more than conquerors," through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Many excellent Christians however, in opposition to the

doctrine maintained by us, hold, to use the language of one of their most distinguished divines, that, "A *believer* may *totally* lose his *faith*, and *regeneration*, and may continue in *apostasy*, and so *eternally perish*."* Either this proposition is not defensible, or that which asserts the final perseverance of the saints, in other words, the continuance of all believers "in a state of grace to a state of glory," must be abandoned. Both cannot be true. To which shall we adhere? It is our interest, and our duty to know the truth, on this and all other topics, and, thanks to our God, the means are accessible and at hand, by which the whole inquiry may be fully and satisfactorily determined.

Before entering upon the argument however, either in refutation of the opinion stated, or in defence of our own conclusions, it is necessary, if you would clearly comprehend the question to be examined, that several preliminary observations should be submitted.

In the first place, we predicate final perseverance in grace of those only who are "born again," the saints in Christ Jesus, and not of mere *professors* of religion. Let this fact be kept constantly in memory. Professors of religion, members of the Churches, are not all, as a matter of course, the children of God, and followers of the Redeemer. Many in every age, have assumed the outward forms of godliness, in whose hearts true piety had no dwelling-place. In the estimation of enlightened Christians of every class, *such* are *expected* to "fall away." Their relations to the Church are not congenial; their spiritual duties are burdensome; they soon become weary; and in going back to the world, they return to a course of life which their hearts always preferred. *Their* apostasy is a natural consequence, and always to be anticipated.

It is, secondly, necessary that you discriminate carefully,

* Limboreh's Theol. Lib. v. cap. lxxx.

between *backsliding*, and *apostasy*. The former is the act of turning back from God: the latter is the forsaking, or the renouncing of the religion of Christ. Backsliding consists either in the relinquishment of evangelical doctrine; or in the loss of spirituality of mind; or in the gradual departure from correct morals. *All* these evils are embraced in apostasy. The backslider commits transgressions, but returns to his allegiance, and obtains forgiveness, and acceptance. The apostate continues, dies in his sins, and "so eternally perishes." We teach that none of the true children of God, the believing, the pardoned, the regenerated, the sanctified, become *apostates*. To *backsliding*, however, of every character and degree, all, it is but too evident, even the best, and most devoted are constantly, and painfully liable.

A third preliminary remark. Final perseverance in grace is never accomplished without the divinely appointed instrumentalities. The means, and the ends, are invariably associated. And will believers in Christ always employ these means? If they do, the result can never be doubtful. Messiah himself says *they will*. "If a man *love* me *he will* keep my words, and my Father will love *him*, and we will come unto him, and make our *abode* with him."* "This is the *love* of God that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous."† The saints of the Redeemer—

> "Have proclaimed him King, and in their hearts
> His title is engraven, with a pen
> Dipt in the fountain of eternal love."

With these considerations before you, we proceed to weigh carefully, and prayerfully, in the balances of divine truth, the principal objections to the conclusion that all believers in Christ will persevere in grace unto the attainment of final and complete salvation, never "totally losing their *faith*, and

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* John xiv. 13. † 1 John v. 3.

regeneration," but pressing onward till they reach, and wear the crown of eternal life.

The first of these objections may be stated thus:—Many of the angels apostatized. Our first parents also, fell from their original state of holiness. Why then, may not Christians "lose their faith and regeneration," and so bring upon themselves eternal perdition?

We have here brought before us two classes of intelligent beings, angels in heaven, and men in their primal state of innocence. Let us consider them separately. Angels belong to another world. Of the cause, and nature of their apostasy, I may be permitted to remark, that we know very little. Upon this topic our Heavenly Father has not deemed our instruction necessary. Allusions to the subject in his word, are made only incidentally. No argument therefore, can be predicated upon the fall of *angels*, in support of the doctrine which teaches the apostasy of *Christians*. Here we dismiss this part of the objection.

But our first parents also fell from their original state of holiness. If so, may not Christians under similar influences, fall and be lost?

This proposition demands our serious investigation. I observe, that between their primitive condition, and that of truly regenerated men of subsequent ages, no such similarity exists, as will admit of conclusive reasoning from the one to the other. Let several facts, evincive of the truth of this statement, be considered. You will, in the first place, remember that the covenant of God with them was wholly different from that upon which you now stand. To Adam Jehovah said:—"Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die."* The obligation of this covenant

* Gen. ii. 16, 17.

was a simple negative, upon a single point. How easy would have been compliance! The conditions were explicit. Obey, and live; disobey, and die. The result need not be repeated.

With this, contrast the Gospel Covenant:—"I will put my laws into their mind, [saith Jehovah] and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people; and they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest; for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins, and their iniquities will I remember no more."* Well may this be distinguished as "*the covenant of grace!*" How utterly unlike the Adamic. With our first parents all was unbending justice. With you all is favor, mercy, boundless forbearance. In the covenant with them, no provision was made for the pardon of sin. In the Gospel covenant, this is one of the strongest features. Besides all this, *they* were, until they sinned, utter strangers to pain, and sorrow, and wasting wretchedness. They had no experience of evil. *You* have known all its bitterness. *They* disposed of their own life, and, alas! incurred its dreadful forfeiture! "*Ye* are dead [to sin] and *your* life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also, appear with him in glory."† Their condition was wholly different from yours. It was almost its antipodes. The reasoning from analogy therefore, in other words, from their fall to yours, is here clearly out of place. It is not legitimate. Neither, as you now see, from the fall of angels, nor of our first parents from their original state of holiness, can any valid argument be adduced, proving that regenerated men, once depraved and sinful, but now redeemed and sanctified, are liable to "lose their faith, and

* Heb. viii. 10–13.

† Col. iii. 3, 4.

regeneration, or to continue in apostasy, and so eternally perish." The objection is without relevancy, or force.

The threatenings, cautions, and warnings, with which the word of God every where abounds, imply, it is alleged, if they do not aver, the probability that some true Christians will apostatize, and forever perish. They are therefore presented as a second objection to the doctrine it is my purpose to establish.

That such threatenings, and cautions, and warnings, are of constant recurrence in the divine word, and that they are in their character appalling, is most true. The premises are therefore cheerfully conceded, but the conclusion from thence, does not appear to me, by any means natural, or a matter of course. The reasoning is illogical, as I shall presently fully demonstrate. Let two important facts be here fixed carefully in the mind. The Church of Christ is composed, not of the regenerate alone, but of the unregenerate also. This is the first fact. The second is, that all these threatenings, and cautions, and warnings, are addressed to the members of the Church as a body. Both these truths will, I suppose, be readily admitted by all.

But I would be fully understood, and therefore, will refer you to testimony. I do not admit that the unconverted have any right to a place in the Churches. The word of God, we very well know, does not approve their admission. On the contrary, it is strictly prohibited. But those who administer the affairs of the kingdom of Christ upon earth, are men. They are imperfect. Their administration also must therefore be imperfect. Our best efforts may be exerted to preserve the body pure from unworthy members, but we cannot read men's hearts, and in despite of all our vigilance, very many find their way into the Church, who are strangers to repentance and faith. Some probably, for special reasons, seeking to appear what they know they are not; and others candid, and sincere, but misled, and de-

ceived. I state the simple fact that there are unconverted men in the Churches. So it has been in every age, in apostolic as well as in our own times. A Judas, and a Simon Magus, were then members of the Churches, and stood side by side, with a James, and a John. So now, the converted and the unconverted, the eminently holy, and the profoundly depraved, meet and mingle in the sanctuary, and at the very table of the Lord. Such, to a greater or less extent, are all the Churches. This we know to be true, by the institution in the word of God of disciplinary measures to exclude the unworthy when discovered, and by our own personal observation.

To the Churches as bodies, so composed, are all the fearful passages in question addressed. To the members of the Church at Rome for example, Paul said, "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die."* To those of the Churches of Galatia, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap; for he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption."† To the members of the old Jewish Church the prophet Ezekiel said, "When the righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned. In his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sins that he hath sinned, in them shall he die."‡ Does any one deny that these, and all similar threatenings, are, in fact, addressed to the members of the Churches? If they are not addressed to members of the Churches, they can have no influence upon the argument. They are directed to those who are *not* members, and whose claims to religion, since all truly religious men unite with the Churches, are at best, exceedingly questionable. They are in truth, however,

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* Rom. viii. 13. † Gal. vi. 7, 8. ‡ Ezek. xviii. 24.

addressed to the Churches, all of whose members are *professedly* righteous, and *claim* to be accepted of God through Christ. They are so regarded by their brethren, and by all others. For a season, they all act in accordance with their profession. No difference in zeal, and good works, can be perceived between the truly converted and unconverted. They all, whatever may be really the fact, bear the same character. They are known as Christians, and men of God.

Uniting with the Church, however important this act may be, is an easy matter. It is but the beginning of the Christian life. Next comes the period of trial. Will all who join the Churches, bear the test to which sooner or later, they will most surely be subjected? Remember also, that the period which is to try the strength of their faith, patience, obedience, and fidelity, extends through their whole life upon earth. With these facts before you, survey the scene which I will now sketch as it passes. For *one*, the seductions of sense, ere long prove too mighty. He yields, lives after the flesh, and dies. Another, carried away by the fascinations of the world, its wealth, ambition, honors, pleasures, is found sowing to the flesh! He reaps corruption. Then the righteous man, he who had been eminent for zeal, and good works, foremost in the sacred ranks, is overthrown, turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity, and miserably perishes! A succession of similar events continues. Their professions are thus tested. They prove unequal to the trial! They have fallen, and are probably lost forever. Behold the picture. Is it imaginary? Alas! far from it. Do these facts, however, prove that the persons in question have "lost their *faith*, and *regeneration?*" Surely not. The facts all concur to demonstrate that they never possessed these high endowments. True, they *professed* religion. But the indubitable evidence of a man's "*faith* and *regeneration*" is not alone that he has been excited, and experienced fears and sorrows, and confi-

dence and raptures. Nor that he does many righteous acts, and is lauded as eminently devoted. But it is that he sustains the tests to which he is subjected in the Christian profession. The "refiner's fire" consumes the dross only. The pure gold all remains, and is by the process, rendered but the finer, and the brighter. Can it be proved that these men who have fallen, although they previously maintained the character of great piety, were ever really regenerated? Never. Such proof is impossible, as long as men can appear to be what they are not. Then *their* fall is very far from showing that the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints is not true.

Do not, however, the truly converted also, sometimes fall? We have seen that there are in the Churches two classes of persons. So, I beg you to observe, are there two classes of persons among the fallen. The one class, now free from the Church, seem to delight in sin. Their hearts grow daily, more and more obdurate: their conscience appears but a feeble impulse: their sin against God has no restraint, except their desire to subserve their own personal and family reputation, and interest. The other class are, after a while at least, overtaken by remorse. Repentance pursues them; and, with self-loathing and tears, *they* return, and assure us that, throughout all their wanderings, they were doing violence to their consciences, and their judgment, and were supremely miserable. The former were unregenerate apostates; the latter converted backsliders. If some like Hymeneus and Alexander make shipwreck of their *professed* faith and good conscience, and thus go down miserably to eternal death; others, like David and Peter, return from their sins, and give themselves anew to the service of him who so graciously said, "I will heal their backslidings: I will love them freely."*

* Hosea xiv. 4

These general remarks apply to all the *individual* instances of apostasy recorded in the scriptures, and which are constantly occurring within the circle of our own observation. Prophecy foretells them, and time witnesses the truth of the prediction. Many of Christ's own personal disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Men are still characterized by like conduct. Were such ever changed in heart? They have been, we have said, under spiritual influences; they have done many things religiously; but all the testimony accessible, forbids the conclusion that they were ever renewed. Of those in the Philippian Church, and they may be safely assumed as examples of all others, Paul does not intimate the former regeneration, but says, "Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction."*

Of what value then, we may be asked, are all these threatenings, and warnings, and cautions? They are, I answer, of infinite benefit to those who, without having experienced any change of heart, have nevertheless professed religion. They have assumed a most dangerous position.

Still they are not beyond the boundaries of mercy. They may yet repent, believe, and be saved. But how are they to be reached? Threatenings, and cautions, and warnings, are addressed to the whole Church. Were they not, these graceless professors would never apply them to themselves. The appalling declarations of Jehovah of which we speak, may bring dismay, and trembling to the heart of the contrite. They at the same time however, apprise the unrenewed of their danger, and thus become the means of their salvation. They are promotive also of the highest interests of the true Christian. What in fact, are they all, but so many expressions of love, by which their Father in heaven

* Phil. iii. 18, 19.

assures them of the inseparable connection which always subsists, as well between sin and misery, as between holiness and salvation. They, in all cases, imply the opposite promises, and do often, most effectually, the work of mercy. If we truly "have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord," the fears they excite will serve to make us cleave to the truth with increased tenacity, and to walk before God with growing carefulness, and humility. By how much therefore, the awakening and deliverance of the erring, and the carefulness, and security of those who love Christ, are valuable, by so much are the threatenings, cautions, and warnings of the word of God, fraught with benevolence and grace.

Upon a careful examination of this whole topic you must now clearly see that the threatenings, the cautions, and the warnings, of the word of God, and all the individual instances of apostasy recorded in scripture, and that occur in our own day, afford no proof that any true believer in Christ will ever "lose his faith, and regeneration," or will not persevere in grace unto the attainment of final and complete salvation.

Many, in the third place, object to our conclusion on this subject from the apprehension that the doctrine may inspire a dangerous security, and create carelessness in the use of the means of salvation. They think its practical tendency injurious.

Such may be the effect of crude and erroneous notions of the doctrine. Ignorance, and error, are always productive of evil. But no such consequences are attendant upon it, when truly and fully comprehended. Does any one, professedly a Christian, and properly instructed, deliberately, and intentionally, practice sin against God? This fact ought instantly to convince him that he is yet unrenewed in the spirit of his mind; and he may perhaps be moved thereby to seek as never before, and obtain salvation. It is essential to the very nature of grace that it lead to holiness and

obedience in this life, as well as to salvation in that which is to come. But it is said, men are free agents, and therefore, have the power to throw away their "faith and regeneration." Yes, men *are* free agents; but will they therefore act contrary to nature? Because you are a free agent will you leave the abodes of civilization, resort to the fields, and live as does the ox? You will not, because it is in opposition to your nature. The nature of the Christian is renewed. His *will* is turned to God, and it determines him to serve God. Can you will in opposition to your will? His *affections* are holy. You love our Lord Jesus Christ. Can you then love and follow sin? Can you have experience of its criminality, and ingratitude, and misery, and not instinctively reject it? Can you know Christ, and deliberately, and finally forsake him? Can you have faith in the Redeemer, and cherish an impure heart? Can confidence of your safety in Christ, become the motive which impels you to rebel against him, and follow the life of a sinner? Surely not. Such things cannot be. Yet they must all occur before it can be rendered probable that the doctrine which teaches the final perseverance of the saints, is of injurious practical tendency. But there is another, and a still plainer test, by which the strength of the objection may be tried. I appeal to facts. They are numerous, and at hand. Look around you, and tell me, are those who believe in the doctrine that Christians "fall from grace, and eternally perish."—and there are many such—more circumspect, spiritual, religious, or less likely to become apostates, than those who believe in the final perseverance of the saints? We know they are not. They are, to say the least, as frequently as men of any other class, overcome by the evils which so thickly beset the paths of the Christian. All the testimony in the case disproves therefore, the injurious practical tendency alleged.

These I believe, are all the objections of any importance,

to the doctrine which maintains the final perseverance of the saints. They are the fall of angels, and of our first parents, from their original state of holiness; the threatenings of the word of God; the individual examples of apostasy recorded in the scriptures, and that occur in our own day; and the alleged injurious practical tendency of the doctrine. We have candidly and impartially considered them all, and have seen that they are without weight, and fall far short of disproving the proposition that all true believers will at last, gain the crown of eternal life.

We now turn to consider briefly, some of the leading arguments in favor of the doctrine.

Salvation, I remark, in the first place, is pre-eminently the work of God. This great truth constitutes a primary article in the faith of all evangelical Christians. He has redeemed, regenerated, and sanctified his people, with a view to their salvation, and the glory of all his attributes demands that the end proposed shall be accomplished. "His *love* to his people is unchangeable, and therefore they cannot be the objects of it at one time, and not at another. His *faithfulness* to them, and to his promises, is not founded upon their merits, but his own will and goodness. It cannot therefore be violated. His *wisdom* foresees every obstacle in the way, and is capable of removing it, and directing them into the right path." "His *purpose* is unchangeable, and will be fail to choose the means necessary for its accomplishment." His *power* is almighty, and perpetually exerted for their preservation, and protection. And will he not save his people? To them all, the divine declaration is made, "To an inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you," *ye* "are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time."*

* 1 Pet. i. 4, 5.

The nature of their connection with the Lord Jesus Christ, I observe secondly, justifies the assurance that all the truly regenerate will persevere in divine grace unto eternal life.

"We are bound to give thanks always to God, for you brethren, beloved of the Lord," says an apostle, "because God hath from the beginning, chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth; whereunto he hath called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."* Again. The atonement by Jesus Christ, God the Father has accepted for the forgiveness of your sins. Will he revoke his act of pardon? And will the law once satisfied by Messiah, again turn upon you, and demand at your hands a second satisfaction? Is not the law just, and holy? Again. By your adoption into the family of Jehovah, you are proclaimed from on high, "Heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."† Will this proclamation be reversed, and you disinherited? How can this be, since you receive all these blessings by the *Will* and *Testament* of our Lord himself, and to give full effect to his bequests, the *Testator* is dead? And again. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life."‡ You believe, and therefore have everlasting life. Shall this life be extinguished? This cannot be, since it is impossible that that which is everlasting can after a few years cease to exist. Once more. Jesus Christ is our Advocate to plead our cause before the Father in heaven. Will he fail of success? Now if in Christ Jesus you were from the beginning chosen, to salvation, and to secure it you have been actually called, and endowed with faith, and sanctification; if through him you have been pardoned, and the claims of the law against you fully satisfied; if you are recognized, and proclaimed heirs with Christ of the heavenly inheritance; if you already have everlasting life; and have his glorious promise, "Be-

* 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14. † Rom. viii. 17. ‡ John iii. 36.

cause I live, ye shall live also;"* what can we conclude but that such connection with Christ secures effectually, your final and complete salvation?

The perseverance of the saints in grace unto eternal life, is also evident, thirdly, from the work of the Holy Spirit.

"Now he," said Paul, "which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."† By this holy anointing the people of God are distinguished as already consecrated to be kings, and priests, on high; by the sealing we are received, recognized, and acknowledged, as his peculiar treasure; and by the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts—that is the giving of a part as a pledge of the future bestowment of the whole—he fully ratifies our title to eternal salvation. Further. Our regeneration and sanctification constitute important parts of the process by which we are fitted and qualified for heaven, and give undoubted proof that it is the intention of the Holy Ghost to save us. Will he, after all this, fail of his design?

God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, purposes the salvation of all believers. This truth is now placed beyond the reach of controversy. On this point there is, I must think, no question in the mind of any intelligent Christian. No deficiency can exist on the part of Jehovah, nor of any of the persons in the adorable Trinity. If all believers are not saved, the failure cannot be chargeable to God.

Finally. The salvation of all believers is a result guarantied by the influence of the new nature in the soul of the regenerate.

In every instance of true conversion to God, the will, the affections, the desires, the purposes, in a word, all the powers of the mind, are, as we have already said, turned from sin to holiness. The old unsanctified nature, followed world-

* John xiv. 19. † 2 Cor. i. 21, 22.

ly things; but the new spiritual nature follows of choice, the things of God. This is now the ruling influence of the soul. Men, as a general rule, act always in accordance with the impulses of their nature. This every one knows to be true. To suppose that any one will do otherwise, long at a time, is both unphilosophical, and unscriptural. This principle is recognized by our Saviour himself. "The tree is known by its fruit." "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things."* Christians are, by inspiration, addressed as "Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling."† All men undoubtedly act in accordance with their nature. The nature of believers is holy. They will therefore pursue a course of holy action. Will they then, ever finally abandon themselves to a life of sin? If so they will act in opposition to their nature, to suppose which, we have seen, is against both philosophy and scripture. Into snares, and temptations, they, as has been shown, may, and do, often fall, and not unfrequently, go very far into worldliness, and transgression. But if their nature is renewed, grace will ultimately triumph. The enlightened conscience will not always remain silent. They return to the path of life. This is the doctrine of Paul, who asks, "How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"‡ The grace of the Father, the love of the Son, and the promptings of the Holy Ghost, combine with the desires and aspirations of the soul, and bear the believer onward, and upward, until he stands accepted, and glorified, in the midst of the shining hosts "who have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." If additional proofs of the correctness of this doctrine were needed, they are abundantly supplied by direct and unequivocal declarations of God himself. I must of many, satisfy myself with

* Matt. xii. 33, 35. † Heb. iii. 1. ‡ Rom. vi. 2.

one, or two. He says, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish."* Truly, he "shall confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless, in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."†

The perseverance in grace of all true believers, unto the attainment of eternal life, is, as we have now fully shown, guaranteed by the perfections of God the Father: by their relations with our Lord Jesus Christ the Son: by the work in their hearts of the Holy Spirit: by the character of the new nature with which they are endowed: and by the express declarations of the divine word of truth. With glowing spirits therefore, and boundless gratitude and love, we too, may join in that apostolic exultation, which so gloriously delineates the privileges of all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ:—"If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also, freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died: yea rather, that is risen again: who is even at the right hand of God: who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, 'For thy sake we are killed all the day long: we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.' Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."‡

I have now brought in review before you, some of the most

* John x. 28. † 1 Cor. i. 8. ‡ Rom. viii. 31–39.

distinguished privileges of believers in Christ. How strong the emphasis with which they speak the infinite love and grace of our Heavenly Father! It is yours to enjoy the free and full pardon of sins; to receive from Jehovah entire justification; to be admitted, and approved, among the adopted children of the Most High, an heir of the kingdom of grace on earth and of glory in heaven; to have conferred upon you all the blessings described in the promises of the divine word; to be animated and sustained by the power of hope; and to persevere in grace unto the attainment of final and complete salvation. How rich are these honors! Surprising unspeakably, is their magnitude! Their excellency, what mind can justly conceive! They clothe you with a dignity and glory not inferior to those of the *tallest* of the angels in his presence. And by your side stands God himself, your Father, your Friend, your Deliverer, and points you to exalted seats in that "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." There you will soon be received, perfect, glorified, immortal. Who can describe the rapture which will thrill your bosom, when Messiah shall say—

> "Ye blessed of my Father come, ye just
> Enter the joy eternal, of your Lord;
> Receive your crowns, ascend and sit with me,
> At God's right hand, in glory evermore."

CHAPTER VIII.

REGARDING SALVATION, ALL CLASSES ARE LIABLE TO BE DECEIVED.

The proposition illustrated; deceptions peculiar to the unconverted; to the awakened; to the anxious; to professors of religion; results of being deceived; means of avoiding deception.

HAVING considered the *privileges* of believers in Christ, our minds naturally advert to their *duties*. I have in the preceding pages however, had occasion to allude repeatedly, to the prevalence among all classes of men, of *deceptions* on the subject of religion. A topic of so much importance demands, before advancing further, a more particular and careful investigation. Dangers and snares environ and persue you, through every step of your progress in life! That you should be apprised of their presence and character, and understand by what means they may be discovered and overcome, is of the utmost consequence.

What is there in life regarding which you may not be deceived? In your business pursuits, your intercourse in society, the confidence you repose in others, in all that concern this world or the next, deceptions constantly meet you. But in regard to *relation*, where deception is the most injurious and fatal, here you are peculiarly and especially liable to their approaches. To your worldly interests you are always alive. These you carefully survey, and guard with anxious caution. But your spiritual affairs share much less of your attention. Respecting *them*, imposition would seem, in many instances, to be almost invited! It is also remarkable, that when men have once embraced a delusion, they in

nearly every case, evince a singular unwillingness to be convinced of it, or to abandon it. The impression probably influences them, that in receding they betray weakness, and instability. Their pride prompts them to adhere to it at whatever hazard. How lamentable this condition of things! It arises mainly from the natural disinclination of the heart to holiness, the prevailing love of the world, and other like influences, having their seat in the depravity of the mind. How salutary that caution of the Saviour, "Take heed that ye be not deceived."* You are always surrounded by those of whom inspiration declares that they are "*seducers*," ever "decieving and being deceived."† Satan decieves you; the world deceives you; and not unfrequently, you deceive yourself.‡ There is no safety but in clinging to the cross of Christ.

To some forms of deception regarding religion, the *unconverted* are especially liable.

Very many of this class, I am well aware, no instruction can ever reach. They will not hear it. Others of them, if at any time they are aroused to action in respect to their spiritual interests, never think for themselves. They pursue blindly, whatever may happen to be agreeable to their prejudices; or they give up their minds to their spiritual guides, and follow them, unquestioned, wherever they may choose to lead the way. But there are those among them, who *profess* to think. Of these a large proportion construct their systems of religion *without the Bible*, independent of divine teaching, and give to them that form which comports at the time, with their own perverted notions of what *God should be*, and of *those characteristics* on the part of his creatures he *ought* to approve, and reward with salvation. The Word of truth is in their hands, and they have heard it preached

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* Luke xxi. 8. † 2 Tim. iii. 13.
‡ Rev. xix. 20, and xx. 10; and James i. 22, 26.

and expounded. But what of all that? They have their own opinions, and these appear to them more accordant with reason and justice. *One class* are honorable men, good citizens. They pay their debts, sustain morality, extend aid to the poor, and suffering, and have educated virtuously, and amply provided for their families. More than this, they are assured, heaven does not require at their hands! *Another class* think it necessary to go somewhat further. *They* unite with the Church; receive the ordinances of religion; and give an external obedience to those duties which are most prominently enjoined in the Gospel. *Yet another class* imagine that the death of Jesus Christ secures the salvation of all men: that whatever sins they commit, they atone for by their sufferings in the present life: and therefore about their salvation they give themselves no anxiety! All these with one consent, forget their own deep unholiness, and that they must obtain pardon through Christ, and purification by the Holy Spirit, before heaven to them is possible. How profound the delusion under which they all are laboring!

But this is one only of the aspects of the case. In another point of view, these classes of men are found overwhelmed in delusion, if possible, yet more dark and appalling. Subtle cavils of various descriptions, have taken full possession of their minds. The doctrines of revealed truth they cannot approve. They are strangely ignorant on the whole subject. They have not studied, nor do they understand, even the rudiments of religion, yet they sit in judgment upon its great principles—a conduct which in science, literature, or the arts, they themselves would condemn as absurd—and they unhesitatingly denounce whatever fails to commend itself to their comprehension, and approval! The sovereignty of God, the total depravity of man, salvation by grace, the work of the Spirit in regeneration, these and like truths, they cannot endure. Thus they throw themselves completely into the hands of the wily adversary, and tamely

submit to be bound down in darkness and sin, by this double delusion, calmly dreaming meanwhile, that they alone are free from fanaticism: that they alone are intelligent! These remarks are applicable to all conditions of unconverted men, even to those who are on other subjects, the most cautious and discriminating. The cultivated and the ignorant, are entangled alike in the same snares. The great, the wise, and the learned, are fully as liable to misconceive the true nature of religion, and to fall into destructive errors, as the poor, the ignorant, and the uncultivated. Indeed, *their* danger is even greater, since they are more under worldly influences, and feel a stronger disposition to lean to the suggestions of pride, and the teachings of their own depraved understandings.

> "He that *hates* truth, *shall be* the sport of lies;
> And he that *will be* cheated to the last,
> Delusions strong as hell shall bind him fast."

Who can look upon all these deceived multitudes, thronging the way to eternal death, without deep emotion? How dark, how repulsive their prospect! And yet how all unconscious are they of their danger! "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end."*

There are other forms of delusion that beset more particularly, *the awakened.*

When men desire true knowledge, and especially religious knowledge, we always feel a strong solicitude that they should obtain it. The fact that they may be turned aside, and when they ask *bread* may receive a *stone*, is most melancholy. Thus thousands are betrayed and lost. Some of them are taught that they may expiate their sins by the suffering of self-inflicted miseries; or by temporal sacrifices

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* Deut. xxxii. 29.

and labors, or by the relinquishment, to be appropriated to sacred purposes, of those possessions most dear to themselves; or by some other means of a similar character, and equally preposterous! Others are instructed to rest in the mere forms and duties of religion, assured that through these they shall procure pardon, and preparation for heaven! Others still are deluded by still other errors. *All stop short of Christ.* They believe themselves preparing for a glorious ascent on high, while they are actually, all of them, fixing around their own necks the mill-stone which is to drown them in the sea of everlasting perdition!

But the truly *anxious* in regard to the salvation of their souls, who have access to all the means of knowledge and of grace, will they assuredly, reach the goal of their desires in safety? May *they* also be deceived?

Let such facts as are constantly occurring around us be considered, and compared with the word of God, and you shall then answer as you may think proper. The *anxious* are never safe from deception either in revivals, or at other times. *Revivals* are among the greatest of those blessings with which God visits his Churches in modern times. They ought to be earnestly sought, by every scriptural means. But they need to be conducted with the utmost wisdom and caution. Otherwise they may be attended with evils of the most melancholy character. Let us consider this subject.

In the midst of an "outpouring of divine grace" it is not unusual, nor indeed, is it at other times, for persons to become suddenly and painfully conscious of their lost condition as sinners. It is immaterial how this conviction is produced. It may have been by some alarming providence, or by soul-stirring exhortations and appeals, or by a combination of peculiar circumstances. The sins, and consequent exposure to eternal destruction, of a man in such a condition, fill him with alarm and distress. He prays for deliverance, and is ready to hear or to do any thing, his safe-

ty may seem to require. Among other measures commonly adopted in such cases is the "anxious seat," an expedient which has doubtless been attended with much good, but which is also exceedingly susceptible of great and dangerous abuses. Pressed by earnest invitations, he comes thither, soliciting in his behalf the prayers of the people of God. He becomes instantly, an object to all of the intensest interest, and all that transpires around him tends to increase and concentrate his excitement. He is it may be, entirely ignorant, and needs to be instructed in the knowledge of God, of himself, and of the way of salvation through Christ. But this is scarcely attempted. *Here the evil commences.* No suitable information is given. Indeed, little inquiry is made regarding the true state of his mind, or the extent of his religious intelligence. But every possible effort is employed to give him comfort! The promises are perpetually presented, and he is exhorted to accept them, and to rejoice! Nor in most instances, is expectation long delayed. The anxious *seeker* is soon a happy *convert!*

Let us now subject the process thus described, to a brief, but candid examination. Are we justified in the conclusion that a true spiritual change, such as makes a man a child of God, has actually occurred? Such may be the case. If he has sufficiently "counted the cost;" if he has given himself deliberately, and intelligently to Christ; if he has repented fully of his sins; and if he has with pure motives, and competent knowledge, made the unreserved consecration of himself to God, trusting for pardon and acceptance alone in the Redeemer; if he has done all this, we may entertain for him strong hopes. These are not however, matters of course. Far from it. Indeed, in the case described, all that has taken place may be readily referred to the action of *natural* causes. We all know that agitation, distress, excitement, will, especially when violent, soon become exhausted. "Tears bring their own relief." The soul cannot always re-

main bowed down. The mind, ever averse to suffering, struggles vigorously upwards, and by its own inherent elasticity throws off its weight, and feels comparative relief. To those who are anxiously repeating inquiries regarding his feelings, the fact is confessed that his distress has nearly passed away, and been succeeded by some measure of tranquillity, and calmness. These are all natural results. They are not however attributed to their true causes. The announcement is instantly made, "Thank God; another convert!" A shout of praise goes up from the assembly! Warm-hearted Christians press about him, give him their hands, and with enthusiasm hail him as a brother! The animated scene follows, and passionate exhortations, and ardent embraces, and tears of delight! A tide of strong emotion [illegible] [illegible] Every bosom is heaving! *His* soul is [illegible] with a new and strange joy. He loves [illegible] those especially who have evinced so much concern for his happiness! And this, which could not have been otherwise, constitutes, is told, the evidence of his spiritual change.

Persuaded by those, for whom he cherishes the highest regard, and in whose piety and intelligence he has unlimited confidence, he believes himself a Christian, and unites with the Church. Is he, the inquiry recurs, really renewed? Alas! I apprehend he is not! That many *are* changed under similar *external* circumstances, I as already stated, firmly believe. But many others, perhaps as many, are undoubtedly deceived, and placed in circumstances of greater danger than before! The person in question was deeply moved. He was filled with alarm, and fears, and these were succeeded by joy, and love. But enormous defects were also apparent. Converse with such a man. He has no Christian experience! He was, for a while, miserable. Then he was happy. Beyond this, he knows very little. He can tell you nothing of inbred depravity, or of reliance

upon Christ! Apart from distressing apprehensions of the horrors into which he feared they might hurry him, he had no true contrition for sins. He experienced no bitter humiliation before God. He did not deliberately, and from love to him, choose Christ for the portion of his soul. He formed no fixed purpose ever, and at all hazards, to serve and glorify the Redeemer. He had really, no change of heart! The correctness of this conclusion, evident from the analysis of the case itself, is rendered still more certain by the subsequent conduct of the supposed convert. Ere long the novelty of his new position ceases. The observances of religion, to which, as a member of the Church he is pledged, fail to interest him. They become irksome, and are gradually discontinued! Old associations and pursuits come back upon him, with increasing fascinations. He loves them, and enters into their spirit with the same eagerness as before! The world again assumes its ascendency over him. Soon his brethren find it necessary to pass against him the sentence of excommunication! Or if by a mistaken favor, he is allowed to retain his place in the Church, he is a dishonor to his profession; a perpetual scandal; an offence:—

"Worse for mending! Washed to fouler stains!"

Appalling as is the condition of such an individual, he is not yet beyond the reach of hope. If he will hear and obey the truth, he may even now be instructed, repent, believe in Christ, and be saved. A few instances occur in which this important result is attained. But in most cases it is prevented by the unhappy errors of good, but misguided men. If he fall into their hands, a second and almost certainly fatal delusion is fixed upon him. All such are assured by ministers and others, of a certain class, and they believe 't, that at the time referred to they *really did* experience a change of heart; that they *were* then, "truly and soundly converted," and accepted as the children of God; but hav-

ing permitted the world, the flesh, and the devil, to seduce them from Christ, they "have lost their faith and regeneration;" have "fallen from grace!" Let this opinion be fixed, and their deception is complete.

Their rescue is now almost hopeless. They are doubly deceived. They are deceived not only as to their own change of heart, but also as to what it is that constitutes true religion. Are they again moved to seek salvation? What measures do they adopt? Supposing "they once had religion, but have lost it," they think they know what religion is. In their judgment, it consists in that specific *feeling they once experienced*. They strive therefore, not to be conformed to Jesus Christ, but to regain *the same feeling*. This point is not difficult to reach. The same process will lead again to the same results. Now, as they suppose, they have experienced restoration to the divine favor! They rejoice. They are satisfied! Not many months pass, however, before they again fall. This is ultimately followed by another renewal, and this by another fall! Not a few continue thus alternating through their whole life! They never knew God; they are now whelmed in utter darkness; and unless better instructed, they never can escape from their deep delusion. They are turned fatally aside, and nothing but an extraordinary exercise of divine grace can save them from eternal death! O, how countless the throngs thus annually deluded, and lost! Excitement, agitation, is not religion. Truth must be preached, believed, and sealed upon the heart by the Spirit of God. Truth alone can "make you free." Upon Jesus Christ only, "the rock of our salvation," may you stand firmly.

Another form of deception demands a brief notice. There are those who think themselves "converted," but they have concluded not to unite with the Church! Not to unite with the Church! Why not? They have many reasons, which to themselves at least are entirely satisfactory. The Church

is in a condition too low and cold for them: the practices, or the persons, or some of its members, are offensive. They can do more good out of the Church. Some one, or all of these, and other similar reasons, are *alleged*. The *true* reasons, I imagine, are not named! They are pride, worldliness, the shame of the cross! And they profess to love Christ! Alas, I fear they are yet strangers to their own hearts, and strive to conceal even from themselves, the actual motives that govern them! *Do* they love Christ? Why then do they deliberately determine to disobey him? *Do* they love his cause, and his people? If so why do they refuse to have any connection with them? *They* converted! *They* love Christ, his cause, and his people! They will find at last—would to God they could make the discovery before it is too late—that they have lived and died, under a fondly cherished, but miserable delusion.

These, with many others of less consequence, are the dangers that threaten the *impenitent*, the *unbelieved*, the *anxious*, and *those* who in habitual and known disobedience imagine themselves accepted of God. One other class remain to be considered, *the members of our Churches*. True Christians often fall into most pernicious and dangerous departures from the divine Word. When they do so, it is commonly "because they take a truth as the basis of their error. Their fault is not so much that they follow a falsehood, but that they follow one truth to the exclusion of another. There are many truths both doctrinal and moral, which to the unpracticed mind, appear contrary and repugnant to each other, but which nevertheless, when better informed, we readily perceive to subsist in admirable order and harmony. The source of all heresies is the exclusion of some of these truths, because they seem not to comport with others which are more deeply impressed upon the mind. Hence error cannot be avoided but by embracing all the truths of religion, and giving to each its proper place and influence: nor can error

be refuted but by teaching the whole truth."* But it is not my purpose to refer especially to the errors into which men may be betrayed and yet be saved. I allude to two or three which prove that those who entertain them must be destitute of divine grace.

The thought is most painful that in our purest and best Churches, there may be those who, although received and regarded as the children of God, are really "in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity;" misled, deceived, lost! Have you not found those who make religion to consist almost exclusively, in *happy feeling*, without that purity and *holiness of life* essential to qualify them for heaven? It is indeed, pleasant to have our bosoms swell with delight while we "commune with the Father of our spirits, and with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." It is our privilege and our duty to "rejoice ever more." But unless our hearts are kept from unholy influences, and our obedience to Messiah is in all things firm and regular, this is impossible. He whose morals are questionable, and who enters into the spirit and temper of the world, and yet thinks he *feels* religious joy, is undoubtedly deceived. In such a case *unhappy* feeling is *religious* feeling. Such a man ought to be distressed. But be it remembered, feeling however elevated, can be of very little importance unless it be excited by truth, be holy in its nature, unless it prompt to obedience, and promote the sanctification of the soul. He therefore, whose life *out* of the sanctuary, is *unholy*, but who *in* the house of God is *ever joyous*, ever happy, has yet to learn the true nature of religion. He is certainly deceived.

Another class deceive themselves by supposing that religion consists mainly in *orthodoxy*. *They* repudiate feeling, and felicitate themselves that their system of religion is scriptural. This may be true of their *system*, but alas, not

* Blaise Pascal.

of their *heart*, and their *life*. But what of this? They tell us that they do not expect to be perfect in this world. Much less do they presume they can be saved by their works. But unhappily, they make these considerations a plea for all manner of unholiness, as if men could be saved without holiness, or as if it were possible for faith, and piety to exist, and not develop themselves in corresponding works! Such inconsistencies can be the result only of delusion, and always betray ignorance of renewing grace.

Pardon a reference to one other delusion equally fatal with any of those I have now sketched. Church members fall into what they choose to regard as a state of *backsliding*. They confess they have gone very far into sin, yet, unless they renounce evangelical religion, or which is going but one step further, run into the horrors of utter skepticism, they do not question their own change of heart. They imagine that their experience in time past of God's love, their supposed filial relation to him, and their many other high advantages, make sin to them less dangerous than to other men. They have no idea, since Christ will save all his people, that transgression will destroy them! They console themselves with the reflection that many ancient saints, as David, and Peter, and others, were betrayed into sins even more heinous than theirs, yet they were rescued and saved. They are confident that they will themselves receive similar grace. They thus prove that after all they love sin, and will it is feared, learn when it is too late, that they have been deceived. All these several classes of Church members are professedly the followers of Christ, "but in works they deny him." To them all we may repeat that memorable apostolic admonition, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. He that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; and he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

You are now I trust, convinced of the fearful truth that you are in the midst of dangers, which are assailing you perpetually, and which follow you through life. Are you deceived on any subject? Some injury must follow, and it will always be more or less extensive in proportion to the magnitude of the interests involved. Salvation is infinitely more important than any other consideration of which we can possibly conceive. To be deceived in regard to salvation is therefore, the most fatal and melancholy of all delusions. Your soul is at stake. Your eternal happiness is endangered. Here too, as we have seen, deceptions are more likely to occur, and more difficult to correct, than anywhere else. If you pass through life under their influence, you are beyond recovery. You can live but once. You can have no second trial. You are forever lost!

It is gratifying however, to be assured that deceptions of every grade, and character, may be avoided. If not why are we so often, and so earnestly admonished by Jehovah himself, not to be deceived? Do you ask by what means your defence against so great an evil can be rendered certain? The answer is not difficult. The Bible is before you, and God stands ready to pardon, to sanctify, and to lead you into all truth. Study that holy book. Study it upon your knees. Call no man on earth master. Discard all prejudices of every kind. Form your system of religion, not from any opinions of your own, or of others, but alone from divine revelation. Be satisfied with nothing short of Jesus Christ, embraced by faith. Be not too much swayed by mere feeling and excitement. Let not your confidence that you are really born again of the Spirit, be too easily established. If you find upon examination, that you really love the world more than you love our Lord Jesus Christ, begin again, and instantly, the great work. Remember that you are not saved *for* faith, or because you *believe*, but that you are saved by *grace through* faith. Beware that you do not look

to any *feeling* of mind, or *series* of feeling, which may be the effect of mere natural causes, as the sole evidence of your spiritual change. Should you be betrayed into sin, do not rely upon a false standard of feeling rather than upon the abiding love of Christ, as proof of your restoration to the divine favor. Imagine not that you can be saved *by* works, nor *without* works; *by* feeling, nor *without* feeling. Let your faith in our Lord Jesus Christ be that which works by love, which purifies the heart, and which overcomes the world. Be candid with yourself. If you find yourself in any thing deceived, instantly retrace your steps. Have firmness and decision enough to act according to the instructions of the word of God. Do all this, and you will be safe. You shall never be seduced, or moved from your position as a child of God, and an heir of Glory.

CHAPTER IX.

THE UNION OF BELIEVERS WITH CHRIST DEVOLVES UPON THEM DUTIES NUMEROUS AND IMPORTANT.

The general duties of religion: in them we confess Christ before men; we confess him specifically, in baptism; we confess him in our union with the Church; we confess him expressly in the Lord's Supper.

As a redeemed sinner, saved by grace, what are my *duties!* This inquiry will be among the first suggested to every renewed mind. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"* Love and gratitude springing up in the soul, bring with them in every instance, an irrepressible desire to know, and to do, the will of our Heavenly Father. *The duties of believers!* How multiplied! How various! To them *all* it is impossible that we can here make more than a general reference. Divine revelation however, contains the entire catalogue. Thence you readily learn whatever is necessary to be known. The injunctions of Jehovah recorded in his word, are the full measure of your duties. Are *they* faithfully obeyed? No more is requisite. Obligation there ceases, since if there is no command, there can be no obedience. Nor can he accept less. God has enjoined no duty which you are at liberty to consider trivial, or to your compliance with which he can possibly be indifferent. "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken, than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity, and idolatry."† "Observe," said Messiah, "*all* things, whatsoever I have *commanded* you."‡ And your

* Acts ix. 6. † 2 Sam. xxv. 22, 23. ‡ Matt. xxviii. 20.

obedience, if acceptable, must be *exact*—meeting the command by which it is enjoined; it must be *cordial*—that is, free and cheerful; it must be *universal*—embracing all his commands; and it must be *persevering*—never abandoned, but continued through life, and until death shall open to you the gates of glory.

The *performance* of the duties devolving upon you as a believer, and demanded by your union with Christ, secures *results* of incalculable magnitude. They are no less than your own happiness, the happiness of multitudes around you, and the praise and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

You derive *personally*, from your compliance with them, a large portion of the happiness imparted by religion in the present life. Their various acts, and exercises, chasten the heart, subdue the soul, and give spiritual health, and vigor, and joy. "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."* A strict and faithful compliance with Christian duties has also, a direct and important bearing upon the happiness of *the multitudes around you.* The Gospel breathes perpetually, "peace on earth, good-will towards men." As an obedient follower of Christ, your *example*, like the pure mountain breeze, is always salutary. Your *influence* represses vice, and encourages every virtue. Your *intercourse* is refreshing as the fertilizing showers upon the parched fields. You are a blessing to your family, to the community in which you reside, to your country, and to the world. In a word, you reflect, and recommend the Gospel, which alone, in the hands of the Spirit, can heal the woes incident to fallen men, and prepare them, when they leave this world, for another and a better life. "Ye are the salt of the earth. Ye are the light of the world." But above

* James i. 25.

all, you secure *the praise and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.* This is in truth, *the one point* in which every Christian duty centres. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."* "God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."† *We confess Jesus Christ before men in our obedience to the general duties of religion; we confess him before men, specifically in baptism; we confess him in our union with the Church; and we confess him in the communion of the Lord's Supper.* Allow me to call your attention to each one of these points more particularly.

SECTION I.

BELIEVERS CONFESS CHRIST BEFORE MEN IN THEIR COMPLIANCE WITH THE GENERAL DUTIES OF RELIGION.

Obedience always a result of spiritual religion; importance attached by Christ to our confession of him before men; the nature of that confession; a necessary consequence of the Christian life.

RELIGION is the intercourse of the soul with God. Its exercises are spiritual, such as love, and confidence, and joy, and peace, and thankfulness. "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit, and in truth."‡

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* Matt. v. 16. † Phil. ii. 9, 10. ‡ John iv. 24.

Religion therefore, in its essence, is not palpable to the world. Why then, may it not remain concealed from the gaze of men? But consider the influence it always exerts, and tell me how it can be thus kept out of view? We have already seen that the external conduct of every man, is invariably controlled by the dispositions of his mind. The heart and the life cannot long be materially at variance. The one will always be a true reflection of the other. The spirit of religion cannot exist without prompting to the duties of religion; and the force of its action upon the external man is always proportioned to its power over the soul. To give a holy and benevolent direction to its *outward* development, is one of the great purposes of the word of God. Respecting its teachings you may be ill-informed, and with good intentions, may fail to act scripturally. Or your judgment may be misled, and you may turn aside from the prescribed paths. Friends may oppose; those you love may detain you; a thousand obstacles may arise, and cause you many a painful trial, many a deep conflict. Your affections may be feeble, and the world gaining the advantage, may cause you to be afraid, possibly ashamed, to walk *boldly*, in *all* his commandments and ordinances. Still, true religion will always, to the full extent that it exists in your heart, manifest itself in your obedience. Your life is the thermometer which indicates with certainty, the measure of your devotion. Even the *defects* of your spiritual character you thus *publish* to every intelligent observer. And unhappily, much that bears the name of religion takes its hue more from the frailties of men, than from the word of God. How often do we see added to divinely instituted forms a dazzling pageantry, that thus the service may be rendered more agreeable to worldly vanity, to the corrupt prejudices of men. All unnecessary parade, since it finds its main impulse in human pride, is offensive to true piety, and necessarily repugnant to our Heavenly Father.

But it is due to truth and justice to remark, that *external* devotions often appear most marked, when the motives that prompt them are in the highest degree criminal. Acts of acknowledged duty, are not unfrequently performed with a zeal, and perseverance, which give the reputation of eminent piety. But when the impulse is made known, it is found not to be any desire to please God, or love for the cause of Christ, but for mere worldly and selfish ends. It is to gain applause, or to be seen of men! The honor which comes from God only, is not sought, but a covert appeal is made to the admiration of the multitude. But whatever abuses may assume its name, and successfully counterfeit its appearance, these do not change the character of *true* and *enlightened* religion. It shrinks not; creeps not forth tardily, partially, and with the hue of shame upon its cheek; it does not clothe its forms in unscriptural, and offensive ostentation; it turns not aside to seek publicity, or to court the empty honors that men can give; but it renders, privately, and publicly, an obedience conformed to the word of God, sincere, conscientious, humble; which does not hesitate because *men* may see it, whoever may be spectators; and which walks firmly, steadily, perseveringly, in all God's commandments and ordinances. To be a Christian secretly, and without the knowledge of the world, is therefore, impossible.

We now proceed to consider the *importance* attached by the Redeemer, to your confession of him before men.

His word teems with declarations upon this subject, of singular force and emphasis. "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven." The first ages of Christianity were fraught with dangers. The confession of Christ often led to the destruction of reputation, property, and life. Might not reverence for parents, the dependence of children, the desire to escape persecution,

and to preserve life, be in particular cases, a sufficient apology for the omission of this duty, or at least might they not justify an *attempt* to exercise religion in secret? As if anticipating such inquiries, our Saviour says, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. He that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."* But there are features in the Gospel which to the corrupt heart, are especially offensive. May not these be omitted, if we acknowledge Christ in the remainder? He answers:—"Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels."† To the same purport is the teaching of all the apostles. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."‡ "If we deny him he will also deny us."§ No ambiguity is here; no room for doubt. The obligation is, under all circumstances, imperative. The duty dare not be omitted. Decline you to confess *him* on earth? He will never confess *you* in heaven. Shrink *you* from the reproach of his cross? You can never share with *him* the glories of his exaltation. He is no believer who does not in all things, identify himself with the Redeemer.

And now, what is implied in the confession of Christ before men?

Is it sufficient to acknowledge him in words only?

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* Matt. x. 32, 33, 37–39.

† Mark viii. 38.

‡ Rom x. 9, 10.

§ 2 Tim. ii. 12.

To confess Christ is to *receive* him as the only begotten Son of God, the propitiation for sins, the Mediator, the sovereign Lord of the living and the dead, and to trust in him alone, for life and salvation. And this is not all. The confession of Christ embraces also, an avowal of your faith in the truth of all the doctrines revealed in his word, and of your duty to obey, and your actual obedience to all his injunctions of every character. Nothing less is the confession of Christ before men, which must be made openly, willingly, and in the divinely instituted forms.

One of these forms is found, I have said, in the observance of the *general* duties of religion.

Do not these require that you forsake all sin; that you love Christ; that you live for the happiness of others rather than for yourself; that you be instant in prayer; and that you take part in the social and public worship of the sanctuary? It cannot be that those who do this, and who also deny themselves, and take up their cross, and follow Christ; whose affections are set on things above; who walk by faith, and not by sight; who live unto God; and who keep themselves unspotted from the world; it cannot be that they should not differ widely, from those whose spirit and pursuits are of an opposite character. Can you withhold an avowal of the cause of your peculiarities? An appeal to the authority of Jesus Christ is inevitable. You cannot live as a Christian, and avoid confessing him before men. A Christian *life* is a manifest and most emphatic confession of Christ. You will, you must thus confess him. Nor will this be a reluctant service. As an affectionate son glories in a beloved father, so spontaneous is your tribute to him who died to redeem you, who saves you from all sin, and with whom you hope, in the society of angels and of saints, to dwell forever in the glories of heaven.

Thus briefly have we shown that spiritual religion in its very nature, involves a confession of Christ before men; the

importance attached to this duty by the Redeemer himself; the considerations implied in the confession; and the manner in which it necessarily arises from your observance of the *general* duties of religion.

SECTION II.

BELIEVERS CONFESS CHRIST FORMALLY BEFORE MEN IN BAPTISM.

The evidence; engagements involved in the confession; advantages accompanying it; its doctrines, its facts.

CHRIST JESUS is the glory of the Christian. In the work of salvation, he is "the first and the last, the beginning and the ending," the giver of "every good gift, and every perfect gift." To him you are indebted for all blessings. You will therefore, hasten to *confess* him before men, not alone in your observance of the *general* duties of religion, but in those *specific forms* also, which he has instituted for this especial end. Of these, one we have said, is *baptism;* the portal through which you enter *professedly*, the temple of the Christian life.

The public participation in the distinguishing forms of any system of religion, human or divine, has ever been regarded as in its very nature, the profession of that religion. He who offers a sacrifice to idols, is a *Pagan*. The man who observes the prayers, and ablutions, prescribed by the prophet of Mecca, is a *Mohammedan*. In your baptism, and subsequent communion at the sacred table, you declare yourself a *Christian*. This conclusion is sustained by the common sense and reason of mankind; and it is confirmed by the teaching

of the apostles. To the Churches of Galatia Paul said—and his statement is applicable to every other true Church, in whatever age or country—"Ye are *all* the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." But on what ground did he venture so broad a declaration? He continues; "For as many of you as have been baptized unto Christ, have put on Christ,"* have intelligently, and publicly, confessed him before men. He is the prince of life, and you have "put on" the attire which distinguishes his followers. He is the captain of your salvation, and you wear the uniform of his army. None entered the sanctuary as *members* of these Churches, nor of any other Churches, in apostolic times, without such confession. The language of the law is, "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved."† When at Cæsarea, "the door of faith" was opened to the Gentiles, and many were happily converted, Peter said, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he *commanded* them to be baptized in the name of the Lord."‡ A distinguished Ethiopian, servant of Candace, applied to Philip for baptism. A confession of his faith was immediately demanded as a necessary preliminary. The Eunuch "answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."§ Even those who were baptized by John confessed Christ in that ordinance. "John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on him who should come after him, that is on Christ Jesus."‖ In baptism therefore, an ordinance peculiar to the Gospel, appointed by the great Lawgiver, and to be perpetuated to the end of time, every believer is required, by divine direction, to confess our Lord Jesus Christ.

But this confession involves other considerations besides

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* Gal. iii. 26, 27. † Mark xvi. 16. ‡ Acts x. 46–48.
§ Acts viii. 37. ‖ Acts xix. 4.

the mere physical ceremony of baptism. The state of the heart is of infinite moment. Moral action is demanded. A declaration preparatory is made, in some form, and in your *proper person*, usually before the Church, that you have, in truth "put off the old man, with his deeds;" that you no longer "walk according to the course of this world, in the lusts of the flesh, and of the mind;" that you are "dead to sin," and "live no longer therein;" that you "are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world," but by the grace of God "have overcome the world." "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." To those who seek him, God gives "repentance to the acknowledging of the truth: and that *they* may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, *who* are taken captive by him at his will." Consequently, before baptism can be lawfully administered, you *renounce* the *world* and all its pomps and ministers, the *flesh* with all its sinful desires and gratifications, and the rule and influence of *Satan*, the great enemy of your salvation. All these you utterly and forever cast off, and discard.

Nor is this all. You enter also in a most solemn *pledge*, that, looking constantly to God, and relying upon the aid of his Holy Spirit, you will earnestly endeavor to maintain a pure life, conformed to the teachings of his divine word. From your baptismal sepulchre you "arise to walk in newness of life." With you, "old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." You have "crucified the flesh, with its affections, and lusts;" and "the fruits of the Spirit" are in your heart. You "*live* in the Spirit, and *walk* in the Spirit," obeying all the laws, the ordinances, and commandments of Messiah. Whatever he has revealed in his word, you bind yourself to receive, believe firmly, and practise with fidelity, in the true spirit of reverence, and fervent humility. "We are the circumcision, which worship

God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." We count all earthly things worthless "that we may win Christ, and be found in him, not having on our own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith; that we may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death, if by any means we might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." In such terms divine inspiration describes your declaration of allegiance to our Lord Jesus Christ.

From these considerations, it will be seen that your religion does not consist in mere negatives. It is not enough that you "are *dead* to the *world*." You must also be "*alive unto God* through Jesus Christ our Lord." Less than this is certainly not embraced in your baptismal vows, declarations, and professions. But we are asked, If baptism does not introduce us into the covenant of grace, nor procure the pardon of sins, if it is not a seal of the covenant, nor a pledge of God's mercy and salvation, what can be its value in religion? To any others than believers, or when administered for any other purpose than the confession of Christ, it is, I answer, of *no value* whatever. Indeed it is an evil, a sin, since in such a case, it is a violation of the law of God, and a degradation of his holy appointments. Is it not enough that the Redeemer has instituted it as a mode in which all his people publicly confess him, and with the renunciations and vows associated, *assume* formally the high obligations of the Christian life? As a mere ceremony it is nothing. Its moral effect however, upon the minds of those who worthily receive it is incalculable, both in extent, and excellency. It is similar in religion, to the *conjugal* vow in *social* life; and who does not know that this gives character to all the subsequent actions and pursuits of those who enter it? Our union with Christ, of which baptism is the outward

profession, is as you are aware, in the language of inspiration, designated as a spiritual marriage. *Civil* life is full of similar examples. Our fathers, in the ever memorable Declaration of Independence, after enumerating their grievances, and appealing to God whose blessings they invoked upon their enterprise, to witness the rectitude of their intentions, solemnly *renounced* all further allegiance to the British crown, and declared these States *free*, and *independent*; and to maintain this their declaration, they *pledged* to their country, and to each other, "their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor." The effect of this act who can fully conceive? It gave to the people union, and strength, and perseverance, and bore the nation onward triumphantly to victory, prosperity, and greatness. Similar to these instances is the moral influence of baptism.

I refer with reluctance to the errors and consequent abuses of baptism which have prevailed, and still govern so many minds. In the midnight of the Church, men attributed most of the efficacy of religion to its ceremonials. Then it was that men fell into the conceit, still so simply credited by the multitude, that the benefits are in the *baptism itself*, and not especially in any *moral effect* it produces upon the mind of the recipient! By its power, when administered as we have already seen, to no matter whom, whether in infancy, or in maturity, sins it was believed, were pardoned, and the soul purified and saved. But light is now dawning upon the minds of men. The Bible is in their hands, and having conned carefully its rich pages, they ask, What benefit can an infant receive from baptism? Aye! what? It cannot be necessary to its salvation, since should it in childhood, be removed by death, it is certainly saved, and as well without baptism as with it. And why baptize unregenerate adults under the designation of *seekers, mourners*, or of any other character? What advantage can they derive from the ceremonial? None whatever. For admitting to the rite any of

these classes, no authority can be found in the divinely inspired Canon, in the Old Testament or in the New, either in the form of command, of precept, or of example. Why then, so much anxiety and haste to baptize all sorts of people? It is an offence to religion, an injury to the Church, a detriment to the recipients, an evil only. *You* cannot but remember the divine injunction so imperative under a former dispensation, and now no less obligatory upon every believer: "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it. Thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it."* When such, and such only, are baptized as are prepared *voluntarily, deliberately,* and *intelligently* to confess Christ before men, according to the divine word, then, and not till then, will baptism be attended with its legitimate results: will the line of distinction be visibly drawn between believers and unbelievers: the boundaries of Christianity be, as was originally designed, distinctly marked; and the Church as in the days of the apostles, appear in her true majesty:—

> "Clothed with the sun, and in her train the moon,
> And on her head a coronet of stars,
> * * * And in her hand
> Immanuel's cross, her sceptre and her hope!"

I have shown you, from the word of God, that baptism is the *form* in which you confess Christ before men. Is that form *specific?* Is it *fixed?* Most assuredly it is. No truth can be more certain. Were there no other testimonies in proof, this is shown alike by the doctrines which it teaches, and the facts which it commemorates.

What are the doctrines taught by your baptism? It is descriptive of your *Christian experience.* As a believer, are you not dead to sin, buried to the love and practice of all evil, and raised again to a new life of holy obedience? It also *points* truly, to *the reasons* of your hope, and confidence.

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* Deut. xii. 32.

According to the divine arrangement, *you* are *one* by faith, with the Redeemer. The law therefore, so far as it affects you, is satisfied, and you are approved of God, because, as we have before seen, since Christ and you are one, in Christ's death for sin, you died to sin; in his burial, you were buried; in his resurrection, you were raised up, and in his victory, you are a glorious conqueror! All this *you* are regarded as having done, not in yourself, but in Christ, since what he as your representative, did *for* you, God regards as done *by* you, and therefore, he for Christ's sake, pardons, sanctifies, adopts, and crowns you with eternal salvation! Again. Your baptism is administered "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." This is a *doctrinal* declaration, evincing that you have embraced that amazing salvation which is offered by the freeness of the Father's grace, which is secured by the infinite satisfaction to divine justice of the Son, and which is made effectual for you personally, by the regeneration, and sanctification of the Holy Spirit. These are the doctrines taught in your baptism. They are vital, evangelical, distinct, most animating.

The *facts* which your baptism commemorates, what are *they?* The sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, his body broken, and his blood shed upon the cross for you, are constantly presented in the *sacred supper*, as we shall have occasion hereafter, more fully to notice. In your *baptism* are seen his *burial*, and *resurrection*. These facts, taken together, constitute the foundation upon which stands the temple of eternal life. Do I *err* in this statement? It is impossible. I appeal to the word of God, which on the subject, is full and explicit. "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into [a belief of the fulness, efficacy, and sufficiency of the satisfaction for sin made by] his death? Therefore [the prescribed form of the ordinance] we are *buried* with him by baptism into death, [the profession of our own death unto

sin,] that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also, should walk in newness of life,"* should lead the new life of holy obedience to which in our baptism we are so solemnly pledged. Again. "If the dead rise not, why are they then, baptized for the dead?"† Your baptism commemorates not the burial only, but the resurrection also of Messiah. If however, "the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised," and there is no significancy in your baptism! And again. "*Buried* with him in baptism, wherein also ye are *risen* with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead."‡ We need no further testimony. It is unquestionably certain that the apostles understood baptism to represent the burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. For this reason, it is always a burial in water, and a rising again out of it, performed by a duly authorized administrator, and those who receive it are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. That is no baptism which does not teach the doctrines, and commemorate the facts, set forth by the Redeemer, and his apostles as belonging to the ordinance. Tell me not of sprinkling, and pouring. They are not authorized in any manner, by the word of God; they are unmeaning in themselves; they do not utter the language of the Gospel; they are exotics in the garden of truth; they never can be recognized. Is a *believer buried* in baptism, and raised again? This is intelligent, significant, instructive, calls up such truths of the Gospel, and such facts in regard to what Christ did for us, as move the heart, and animate the soul! How beautiful is the true baptism! How appropriate! How full of impressive solemnity!

We have now seen that believers confess Christ before men formally in baptism: the engagements involved in the

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† Rom. vi. 2-4. † 1 Cor. xv. 29. ‡ Col. ii. 12.

confession; the advantages with which it is accompanied; and the doctrines, facts, and instructions, which it recognizes, and inculcates. Are you a believer, and have you not thus confessed Christ? It is your high privilege. It is your imperative duty. How long shall the command of your Redeemer remain unobeyed? Has your lamp been lighted by divine grace, to be concealed? He went down into the grave, there submitted for a season to the power of death, and having conquered the tyrant, dragged him forth at his chariot wheels, for your deliverance! Do you estimate his victory, and while you profess to look up to him with joy and hope, virtually deny him by refusing to confess him before men, in that form which he has appointed? God forbid! Blessed Redeemer, we will, *we will* keep *all* thy commandments.

SECTION III.

EVERY BELIEVER OWES IT TO JESUS CHRIST AS A MOST SACRED DUTY TO UNITE WITH HIS VISIBLE CHURCH UPON EARTH.

Definition of the Church; characteristics of the true Church; conditions of membership; union with it important to the believer; important to the Church; ultimate prevalence and glory of the Church.

THE duty of every believer to unite with the visible Church of Christ, is a subject of the gravest and most solemn import. The Church of the Redeemer is of divine institution and appointment. Whatever is necessary to its form, character, and development, is fully made known and explained in the "sacred oracles." "What saith the Scriptures?" To these we appeal for perfect instruction. "To the law, and to the testimony."

The Church in its broadest sense, includes all the saved; "the General Assembly and Church of the First Born, which are written in heaven;"* that great multitude which no man can number, of all nations, languages, and people, who shall in the last day, stand accepted before the throne of God. This is the Church *triumphant*. The Church *universal* embraces all those throughout the world, who are united with Christ by a living faith. Many of these may not, by the force of peculiar circumstances, be literally connected with the *visible* Church, yet they are true worshippers, and really constitute a part of the mystical body of Christ. The religion of him to whom such union is practicable, and who voluntarily, and deliberately declines it, ought always, to be seriously doubted. That he labors under some radical *spiritual* defect, is almost certain. Salvation however, is not, as has been so frequently but erroneously

* Heb. xii. 23.

imagined, the result of union with the *Church*, but of union with Christ. Uniting with the Church never of itself, unites us with Christ. On the contrary, union with Christ is an essential condition preliminary to union with the Church. "God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, [although not of the visible Church] is accepted of him."* The *visible* Church *proper*, is a congregation of believers, baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, upon a profession of faith in Christ, and voluntarily united for the worship of God in one assembly, in which the Gospel is truly preached and embraced, and the ordinances administered according to the laws of Messiah. Such was the Church at Jerusalem, the Church at Antioch, the Church at Corinth, in a word, of this character were all the primitive and apostolic Churches. These individual Churches multiply, spring up in various places, and extend themselves over the nations. *Each* is a distinct and separate organization, and governed in all things by the divine word is complete in itself; and *all*, however numerous are, according to inspired instructions, *united* by the strongest bonds; they are united in Christ their head; they are united in love; they are united in fellowship; they are united in obedience; they are united in mutual co-operation for the glory of God, and the salvation of men. The *whole* of these Churches, thus subsisting, and associated, constitute that great *visible* or *universal* body upon earth, known as, "*The Church* of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."† By these facts it will be seen that, in the divine word, the Church is described in these four acceptations: The Church *triumphant*—all who ever have been, or ever will be saved; the Church *militant*—all upon earth, who truly worship and serve God; the *visible* Church proper—a congregation of faithful men.

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* Acts x. 34, 35. † 1 Tim. iii. 15.

voluntarily united in one place, for the worship of God; and the whole multitude of visible Churches of Christ upon earth, of all nations—the *universal visible* Church. We are at present, called to speak only of the *visible* Church of Christ, either individually, or collectively, since it is with the Church in this form, that the duty of every believer requires him to become united, cheerfully, promptly, and without unnecessary delay.

Much has been said, and written, in regard to the essentials which constitute the *true* Church. Upon this point it is important that you should be satisfied, since it is certainly not your duty to connect yourself with any *false* Church, but sedulously to *avoid* such an association. Every one of the various and conflicting sects around us *claims* to be, and I doubt not believes itself *the* true Church. I need not say that this is impossible. All may be false, but since they are so unlike each other, all cannot be true. There *is one true* Church. Is it difficult for you to decide which is justly entitled to this high and glorious distinction? If you must first hear all the disputations of contending parties, on the subject, it will be most difficult. By these subtle and endless controversies you may be confused, and bewildered, but you will never be instructed. "Cease ye from man." God will teach you. In the sacred pages the Church is described with sufficient clearness. Thence alone learn its legitimate character and claims, and all will be plain and easy. The true Church is conformed in all things to the scripture model. It may be honorable, and honored by men, or it may be poor, obscure, humble, despised by the worldly and the proud. Whether it be the one or the other, it is the *true Church*, and that with which to be united is the glory, and true interest, of every believer in Christ.

His Church is emphatically his *kingdom*. He is its sole head, lawgiver, and ruler. All his subjects he rescued from

the god of this world. When upon the cross and in the tomb, he "destroyed him that had the power of death." He "rules in the midst of his enemies,"* and is "Head over all things to the Church."† His kingdom is not temporal, but spiritual; is not established by carnal weapons, but by the persuasive influence of truth, accompanied by the power of the Holy Ghost. By his command, the Gospel is preached, and those who believe are baptized, added to the Church, conducted to the sacred table, and taught to "observe all things, whatsoever he has commanded." He has prescribed its form, and order, and given "some apostles, and some prophets, [necessary in the primitive age, and *now* gives] some evangelists, and some pastors, and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."‡ He has enacted all its laws. And in every department, his authority is absolute. All *human* legislation in the Church, or for the Church, is presumptuous, and revolting. No law is admissible there which he has not ordained; and none which he has instituted, may ever be set aside. In your union with the Church you promise not to obey any man, or body of men, whoever they may be, but you promise to obey Christ. You are as free of every other man, as every other is of you. "One is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren."§ "He is Lord of all," and his Church has received his *word* as their *sufficient*, and their *only* rule of *faith* and *practice*. Such is a sketch of the true Church. It is a glorious unity; "One body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called, in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."‖

At this point, however, an inquiry of great moment pre-

* Ps. cx. 2. † Eph. i. 22, 23. ‡ Eph. iv. 11, 12.
§ Matt. xxiii. 8–11, 12. ‖ Eph. iv. 5, 6.

ents itself, and demands to be calmly considered, and ecided. *Is not the Christian Church a continuation of he Jewish Church?* Must it not for this reason, maintain uch of the forms, and be guided in some degree, by the aws of the Jewish Church? The want of a proper under-tanding on this subject has been productive of many, and ery great evils. I will therefore, here present a brief but ecessary explanation. What is the precise relation be-ween the Jewish Church under the Law, and the Christian hurch under the Gospel? Can it be readily determined? are they "the same Church, under different dispensations?" heir precise relations are, I answer, those between *a shadow nd its substance.* The Christian is not a continuation of the ewish Church. They are not the same Church under dif-erent dispensations. But the Jewish Church is *a type* of he Christian Church. The proof of this proposition occu-es a large space in the Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews. he people, the sacrifices, the temple, the priesthood, and ll the forms of Jewish worship, were typical; "*figures,*" ys Paul, "for the time then present," and to continue until the reformation," that is, the coming of Christ. They ere "the *patterns* of things in the heavens." "The holy laces made with hands," were "the *figures* of the true."* uch are the apostolic declarations on the subject. What true of all the parts, is unquestionably true of the whole. ll the parts of the Jewish Church were figurative of things n the Gospel Church. Therefore the Jewish Church as a whole, was a figure or type of the Gospel Church. Abra-am, the type of Messiah, was the head of the Jewish hurch; of the Christian Church Christ himself is the ead. The natural seed of Abraham received circumcision o entitle them to membership in the Jewish Church; his piritual seed, those who believe in Christ, upon a profession

* Heb. ix. 9, 10, 11-23, 24.

of which they are baptized, receive regeneration to entitle them to membership in the Gospel Church; for "that is not [under the Gospel] circumcision which is outward in the flesh," but "circumcision is that of the *heart*, in the spirit, and not in the letter."* The natural seed of Abraham, by right of the covenant of circumcision, inherited the earthly Canaan; the spiritual seed, since "if ye are Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise,"† by right of the covenant of grace, inherit the Canaan that is above. Under the law sacrifices were literal, and offered only by priests; under the Gospel sacrifices are spiritual, "the calves of our lips," and all *believers* are "priests unto God." "Jesus said, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet in Jerusalem worship the Father," but "the *true* worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in truth."‡ The High Priest in the holy place upon earth, the type, is superseded by Christ himself, the substance, who "by a greater, and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building, neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, entered in once into the holy place, [into heaven itself] having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth [ceremonially] to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God." "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for us."§ It must be, I think, evident to you, that the Jewish Church was the type, and nothing

* Rom. ii. 28, 29.
† Gal. iii. 29.
‡ John iv. 21–23.
§ Heb. ix. 11–14–24.

more, of the Christian Church. It was not identical with it, but bore the relation that a shadow does to its substance. We need not now scrutinize the shadow to find out the form, and character of the substance. It is ours to contemplate the glorious *reality*, the *Church itself*, as developed in its full proportions, in the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and practically existing before our eyes.

We have now seen the Church, the true Church of the Redeemer, the Church with which we have said, *believers* are under the most sacred obligations to become united. But is the union with his Church of *believers* all that is proposed by Messiah? Are not *infants* also, and "the *anxious*," or as they are called, "*penitent seekers*," to be received into the Church? Where, I ask, is the authority, or the permission, to receive any of either of these classes of persons? If Jehovah had intended that *they* should form a part of his visible kingdom upon earth, why is his entire revelation utterly silent on the whole subject? Is not his word "a sufficient rule of faith, and practice?" It is a sufficient rule. It is the only rule. But in the sacred record no *intimation* is found of any such membership! Tell me not then, that *infants* and "*penitent seekers*," are to be received. It is unauthorized; it is useless; it is *worse* than useless; it is an injury to the parties concerned; an evil to the Church; and an offence against God. Read carefully the Gospels, the Acts, the Epistles, the Revelations, read all, and you will find that the members of the Churches are addressed familiarly, as the "Sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints;"* as "partakers of the divine nature;"† as "partakers of the heavenly calling;"‡ as "a chosen generation; a royal priesthood; a peculiar people;"§ as "the Church of God, which he hath pur-

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* 1 Cor. i. 2.
† 2 Pet. i. 4.
‡ Heb. iii. 4.
§ 1 Pet. ii. 9.

chased with his own blood."* Such, professedly, were all the members of every Church in primitive times. "Ye are *all*," said an apostle, affectionately addressing them, "ye are all the children of God, by *faith* in Christ Jesus." Where then were the infants, the seekers, and others destitute of a living faith in the Redeemer? Assuming the word of God for our guide, no proposition can be more clearly true than that those, and those only, who are converted, and become new creatures, are proper subjects for membership in the Church of Christ.

And now, what, more especially, are the obligations which bind all believers to become united with the visible Church of Christ upon earth?

Were there no other reasons, it is sufficient that God has commanded it. Can you live in violation of his known will, and enjoy at the same time spiritual health, and prosperity, and blessing? Impossible. Conscious disobedience must always smother the affections; wound the moral sense; weaken and destroy the spirit of prayer; and otherwise inflict upon you irreparable injuries. These can be turned aside only by your union with the Church. But there are positive as well as negative blessings connected with the discharge of this duty. Your confession of Christ, and its many concomitants, call to your aid in your struggle against all sin, the advantages of a *decided* position; the sympathies of Christian intercourse are elicited; and participation is secured in those social Christian duties, and devotions, which are essential to increase your strength, to animate your heart, and yield true usefulness, and happiness. Thus only can you become a vigorous, intelligent, and spiritual Christian. Look at the man who retires voluntarily out of the Church! A believer in Christ he possibly may be, but his whole Christian life, if it deserves the name, is sickly

* Acts xx. 28.

feeble, and dwarfish. He lives in contact with the chilling effluvia of sin. The world, its spirit, and its many enticements, exert over him a most injurious influence. He remains, *religiously*, a squalid, and pitiable object! See, he lies torpid, hid in the dark damp caverns of doubt and wretchedness, into which the warming and animating rays of the Sun of Righteousness never penetrate! Have you life, the love of God in your heart, the love of his cause, and his people, and the knowledge of the will of Christ? These *must, will*, always strongly incline you to the Church, where alone can be maintained their free and healthy action. Your happiness demands your union with the visible Church of Christ. The full vigor and development of the Church itself, also demand it.

What is the *object* proposed to be accomplished by the Church? While it is the repository and guardian of divine truth, it is also the instrumentality in the hands of God for preaching the Gospel, and extending the kingdom of Messiah over the whole earth. It is fitted, in the holy disposition and life of its members, effectually to illustrate the power and excellency of divine grace. It is the nursery of saints in which, by the divine blessing upon scriptural instruction, healthful discipline, and spiritual superintendence, they are trained for the duties of the present life, and fitted for the glories of the next! How excellent in reference to itself, how exalted are the purposes of the Church! How salutary also, its influence upon the *world*! Its intellectual and moral light spreads over all the ramifications of society, restraining the vicious, encouraging the virtuous, and dispensing blessings to all. With these considerations in full view, how trivial appear the objections to union with the Church by which we are generally met! We are told by some, that it is not exactly convenient. Others point us to defects on the part of some of its members. A concealed fear perhaps, exists that the relation may impose pecuniary, or other bur-

dens. We are reminded that it is not necessary to salvation, and persuaded that much good can be done out of the Church! Preposterous, all! If you are not a Christian, confess it to yourself, and, at once—

"To your knees, and cry for mercy."

But if you really love Christ, act worthy of the grace which God has bestowed upon you. May one believer decline to unite with the Church? With the same propriety, may another. So may all! Where then is the Church, with all its glorious beauty, and majesty? If there were no better Christians than such as these, it would be stricken down! It would be destroyed! Its light would be extinguished! Darkness would roll back upon the world, and cast over it the pall of despair and misery! *You* are, I trust, not of this craven cast. Range yourself at once then, under the ample folds of its broad banner, and firmly, and intrepidly, fight the battles of the Lord.

You owe it to God, you owe it to yourself as a believer in Christ, you owe it to the Church, and you owe it to mankind, to unite with Christ's visible kingdom. More than this, you owe it to your brethren. See, at their posts the faithful few, toiling on with firm confidence, and unshrinking hearts, "faint, yet pursuing." You profess to love the cause in which they are engaged, and do you refuse to aid it by your own labors! Will you suffer your *example* and *influence* to be thus pernicious? Have you the heart to withdraw from your brethren your countenance; to withhold your co-operation; and to leave them to struggle on alone, and maintain unassisted, the desperate conflict? God forbid! The love of Christ forbid! You *will*, boldly and cheerfully, and at once, take your position, amid the embattled hosts of the King of kings.

We have now seen that it is the duty of every believer, without any unnecessary delay, to become united with the

visible Church of Christ upon earth, because God commands it; because it brings to his aid the influence of sacramental vows; because it demands of him duties the discharge of which gives him strength, and increases his devotion, usefulness, and happiness; because it weakens the power of the world over his affections; because the love of Christ shed abroad in his heart strongly impels him to this sacred association; because those who do not, if it be practicable, never make any considerable progress in knowledge, or spirituality; because it is necessary to the full vigor and influence of the Church; and because, since there is no middle ground, he *must* either unite with the Church, or abandon his brethren to fight the battle alone, and give substantially, his example, and influence, against the cause of truth and salvation. Is more wanted to decide you, and prompt to instant and obedient action? Has the spirit of religion changed? No *external* barriers obstruct, and do you yet linger? The ardor of *primitive* disciples could not be restrained. Persecution, with clotted garments, stalked among them; and prisons, and chains, and gibbets, and fires, met them everywhere; but they shrunk not, they quailed not, they,—

"Moved onward, right on."

The hope of eternal life through Jesus Christ, no sooner sprung up in their hearts, than they "counted not their life dear unto themselves" but were eager at whatever hazard, to enter the sacred precincts of the Church. Having "given themselves to the Lord," they joyfully "gave themselves to one another by the will of God." O, for a return of the spirit of primitive Christianity, when redeemed sinners saved by grace, were ready, and considered it their highest honor, to consecrate themselves, unreservedly, to the praise and glory of him "who died for them, and rose again!" And, "know *ye* not, that *ye* are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; [O, how rich; how precious; the

heart's blood of Messiah!] therefore glorify him in your body, and in your spirit," which are the Lord's.

Whether however, *you* are faithful or unfaithful to "the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," the *Church* of the Redeemer shall triumph. It has been pursued, persecuted, wasted, in almost every age, and in all lands, but "the gates of hell have not prevailed against it." God has destined it to universal prevalence, and transcendent glory. Yes, the pure Gospel shall yet be preached to every creature; all nations shall receive it; and ere long, the light of truth, like the light of the sun, shall illuminate the round earth. Millennial glory shall dissipate every cloud; the hoarse voice of discord shall no more disturb the hosannas of all-prevailing love; the whole universe shall be converted into one glorious temple, and all its inhabitants be the worshippers of the living God.

SECTION IV.

BELIEVERS FORMALLY CONFESS CHRIST BEFORE MEN IN THE ORDINANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

Considerations involved in the ordinance; preliminaries to its reception; obligations of Christian duty.

BAPTISM is an ordinance of Christ preliminary to membership in his visible Church. The *Lord's Supper* is a confession of Christ made in the Church, and with his people. The command to observe each, in its proper time and place is imperative. Stern inability only, can be allowed as an apology for their omission. In regard to the sacrament now

to be considered, I shall be pardoned if I consult unusual brevity, and refer you for full information to my work published several years since, on "The Terms of Communion at the Lord's Table."

The institution of this sacred rite, and the design it was intended to subserve, are thus described by an apostle:—"The Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took *bread*; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat, this is my *body* which is broken for you; this do in *remembrance* of me. After the same manner also, he took the *cup*, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my *blood*; this do ye as oft as ye drink it, in *remembrance* of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do *shew* the Lord's death *till he come*."* So full and explicit is this inspired narrative that it would seem difficult to misunderstand its entire import. I refer to but two or three considerations pertaining to the whole subject.

In the first place, I remind you that the ordinance is instituted and designed to commemorate the death and sufferings of Messiah. It cannot fail to call up to the mind these recollections. The *broken* bread represents his *mangled* and *torn* body. The *cup* is the emblem of his flowing *blood*. Your thoughts are carried irresistibly to Gethsemane, to Pilate's judgment hall, to the scene of his scourging, to Calvary, and to the agonies of the cross! "Thus it behooved Christ to suffer," "that he might give repentance unto Israel, and the remission of sins." Here he made the great sacrifice for your deliverance! Here:—

> "Heaven's inexhaustible, exhausted fund,
> Amazing, and amazed, poured forth the price,
> All price beyond."

We have seen that in baptism it is essential to the ordi

* 1 Cor. xi. 23–26.

nance that it represent his *burial* and *resurrection*, so in the Lord's Supper the reception is indispensable of the broken bread, and the flowing wine. In no other manner is it possible for you to show *sacramentally*, the Lord's death. All change is prohibited. "Till he come" the second time "without sin unto salvation," the form he has prescribed is to be conscientiously observed. A failure in the form is a failure in the ordinance, since it is no longer a representation of the facts it was instituted to commemorate.

You declare in this ordinance, secondly, your confidence that his sufferings and death have attached to them infinite merit, and that "by grace, through faith," this merit has become yours! It can be properly received only when this object is kept clearly in view. Has baptism been abused? The sacred Supper has been if possible, still more abused! With what superstitions has it not been associated! To what extravagant and presumptuous purpose has it not been prostituted! Be it ours to "keep the ordinances as they were delivered unto us" by the Redeemer, and his apostles, pure in their form, and directed to their legitimate ends. When you take your place with his people, around the sacred table, and receive the appointed emblems, you expect no mysteries or miracles, and desire to witness no pedantic mummeries. Your purpose is, in this act of voluntary submission and homage, to repeat your confession of him, and to renew your declaration that you "have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."

I have alluded to the duties preliminary to your participation in the sacred Supper. This is a third consideration which demands your attention. Is it your privilege as soon as you are a believer, and simply because you are a believer, to come to the Lord's table? All evangelical Christians believe otherwise. The word of God on this point is plain. The preliminaries required I shall simply state, and leave them for your prayerful examination, without commentary.

You must, in the first place, have had true repentance for sin, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; you must, secondly, have been baptized as prescribed by the divine Lawgiver, in the name of the holy Trinity; thirdly, you must have been received and admitted into his visible kingdom, a member of the Church of Christ upon earth; and fourthly, you must have maintained scriptural principles, and a pure and holy life. These requisitions complied with, you are prepared, and not before, to partake of this distinguished privilege.

It now remains only for me affectionately to urge your careful and regular obedience to Christ, in an intelligent and devotional observance of the Lord's Supper. Faithfully discharge every preliminary duty; seek perpetually, the true Christian spirit; let not a sense of unworthiness which you ought always to cherish, deter you; endeavor to feel, as you should, your obligations to the Saviour who loved you, and gave himself for you; follow him cheerfully "through evil report, as well as through good report;" meditate upon the great doctrines and facts represented by the ordinance; do this, and light, with penitence, love, and joy, will dwell in your heart, and:—

> "Praise, ardent, cordial, constant, to high Heaven,
> More fragrant than Arabia sacrificed,
> And all her spicy mountains in a flame."

These are some of the considerations involved in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper; the duties preliminary to its reception; and the obligations that rest upon every believer thus to confess Christ before men.

The brief and imperfect sketch now submitted of the duties of believers, is sufficient to show the space they occupy in the way of salvation. The glorious centre in which they all meet is the confession of Christ before men. We confess him, as is now seen, in our observance of the *general* duties of religion, and *especially* in the ordinance of baptism;

we confess him in our union with his visible Church upon earth; and in the Supper of the Lord. Do you correctly estimate the importance of this subject? Never, I trust, will you be satisfied with a religion which is cold, superficial, or merely speculative; with a devotion locked up in your own bosom; nor with a lifeless compliance with forms and ceremonies. O, let your faith be exalted and holy; your devotion ardent and animated; and your obedience prompt, full, and cheerful.

> "I venerate the man whose heart is warm,
> Whose hands are pure, whose doctrine, and whose life
> Coincident, exhibit lucid proof
> That he is honest in the sacred cause."

CHAPTER X.

SANCTIFICATION NECESSARILY PRECEDES THE FINAL SALVATION OF BELIEVERS.

Nature of sanctification; forms in which it is manifested; its progressive character; holy living; sanctification not perfected upon earth.

THE great end proposed in sanctification is to bring the people of God into a state of holiness. When you heartily repented of your sins, and fully received the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour, you were *regenerated*, and *justified*. Your *sanctification* then commenced, and with the divine blessing, will continue until you are made *perfect in glory*. In regeneration you received a change of heart. A holy disposition was thereby conferred. Sanctification carries forward and completes the work thus auspiciously begun. It is as the word imports, the *process of making holy*, and eminently the work of the Holy Spirit, with the gracious concurrence of both the Father and the Son. You are "sanctified in the name of the *Lord Jesus*, and by the Spirit of our *God*."* And "This is the will of God, even your sanctification."† It is *procured* by the atonement of Messiah. The *instrumentality* employed is the inspired word of truth. Thus prayed our blessed Redeemer:—"Sanctify them [O Father] through thy truth: thy word is truth." And "For their sakes, I sanctify [consecrate] myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth;"‡ that is, through the *knowledge* of the truth, the *love* of the truth, and *obedience* to the truth. Thus it is seen

* 1 Cor. vi. 11. † 1 Thess. iv. 3. ‡ John xvii. 17, 19.

that in *your spiritual renovation*, all the persons of the adorable Trinity are directly engaged; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Nor are you, personally, inactive. "Work out," directs an apostle, "your own salvation, with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you, both to will, and to do of his own good pleasure."*

I have thus, briefly, and in general terms, given you an exposition, of what I understand to be sanctification, as it relates to believers in Christ.

Sanctification *properly* describes the *state* of the *heart;* but like every other ruling influence, it invariably manifests itself in the life and character.

Its primary, most important, and most comprehensive *manifestation* is *love;* love to God, and love to men. In proportion as holiness pervades your nature, you will delight in Jehovah. His infinite perfections, all his attributes, his whole character, will commend themselves to your affections, as supremely excellent and attractive. Nor is love to God ever unaccompanied by love to men. You will also love your neighbor as yourself. You will regard him with respect and kindness: you will seek to do him good; you will exercise patience towards all his imperfections and failings; you will not envy his wealth, or his honors: but will feel a sincere desire for his happiness, and rejoice in his prosperity. "The Christian is the highest style of man," and while as such, he stands immeasurably above the petty pride and malice of the world, he is approximating perpetually towards the character of the infinitely glorious and eternal Jehovah.

Sanctification will also manifest itself in your gradual, but certain conquest over your sinful appetites and affections. The principle of holiness implanted in your "*new nature*" is a leading impulse of the soul, and must

* Phil. ii. 13, 14.

ultimately triumph over every antagonistic power. As yet, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary, the one to the other."* Not at once is depravity in your nature annihilated. It has received the fatal blow; it is under your feet; it is devoted to death; but it has not yet expired. Unhallowed dispositions will frequently arise, and struggle for the mastery. Even "Paul the aged," was not free from their annoyances. He said, "I keep my body under, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away."† The demands of the flesh must be promptly resisted. When gratified, they become instantly more importunate, and soon gain over us a most injurious control. Your body is your servant. Shall it become your master? *Philosophy*, to say nothing of religion, teaches you a better lesson. But in the divine record you learn that "your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost;" that it "is a member of Christ;" has been redeemed by his blood; and is hereafter to be "raised from the dead, and fashioned like unto his glorious body." It is placed at present, with all its imperfections, under your guidance, and holiness cannot be cultivated unless its sinful inclinations and desires are repressed. It is imperatively necessary that you "deny all ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world."‡ This is an unalterable condition of salvation. "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."§ The work is most difficult, the warfare will be protracted, and your conflicts often severe, but the result is not doubtful. "If you walk in the Spirit," you will not "fulfil the lusts of the flesh."

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* Gal. v. 17.
† 1 Cor. ix. 27.
‡ Tit. ii. 12.
§ Rom. viii. 13.

But sanctification is strikingly manifested in all the social and domestic relations and duties. The man who follows not Christ at home, and in the privacy of his own household, has no claim, whatever may be his public acts, to the distinction of a true disciple of the Redeemer. To this topic divine inspiration refers with especial particularity. Its instructions are even minute. "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church. Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it. Let every one of you in particular, so love his wife even as himself, and the wife see that she reverence her husband."* "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor thy father, and thy mother. And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart as unto Christ; not with eye service as men pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service as to the Lord, and not to men; knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening, knowing that your master also is in heaven, neither is there respect of persons with him."† How full are these inspired directions; how lucid; how explicit! In the domestic sanctuary holiness develops itself in its most alluring and beautiful forms. A bitter and unlovely wife, a bad husband, an unfilial child, a cruel master, an unfaithful servant, cannot at the same

* Eph. v. 22-26. † Eph. vi. 1-9.

time, be a good Christian. Sanctification casts around all your relations a halo of brightness, and gives them everywhere, true excellency and dignity. The same spirit will go with you into all the pursuits and associations of life. Justice, integrity, candor, honor, will characterize all your dealings and intercourse. "Whatsoever you do" let it be done "as unto God, and not unto men."

This is sanctification, and these are some of the most important forms in which it is manifested. It is seen in love to God, and men; in a gradual but certain conquest over all sinful affections and desires; and in a conscientious discharge of every Christian duty.

I now proceed to consider sanctification in another aspect. Unlike *regeneration*, or *justification*, it is *progressive* in its character. It continues, as I have already intimated, to advance in energy, and in command over all your powers, both of the mind and body.

The progressive character of sanctification is taught in all those passages of the divine word which exhort believers to strive for more eminent spiritual attainments. "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh, and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."* "The Lord make you," prays an apostle, "to increase and abound in love one towards another, and towards all men, even as we do towards you; to the end he may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, with all his saints."† Again, "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God, your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."‡ Paul gratefully remarks to the Thessalonians: "We are bound to give thanks always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith grows exceedingly, and the charity

* 2 Cor. vii. 1 † 1 Thess. iii. 12, 13. ‡ 1 Thess. v. 23.

of every one of you all, towards each other aboundeth."* But why bring proof to support a proposition, the truth of which no one can consistently question? It is plain I think, to those who have carefully examined the subject, that sanctification with all those who truly love God, is gradually and constantly progressing, increasing in power, and expanding itself throughout the whole intellectual moral and physical man.

The apostles beautifully illustrate the progress of sanctification by the analogy of nature. "As new-born *babes*, desire," exhorts *Peter*, "the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."† And *Paul* says:—"I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto *babes* in Christ."‡ "I write unto you, *little children*," says *John*, "because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake." "I have written unto you *fathers*, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you *young men*, because *ye* are *strong*, and the word of God abideth in *you*, and ye have *overcome* the wicked one."§ All the forms of life are progressive. It is feeble in its beginning, and regularly advances towards perfection. Spiritual life is not an exception to this rule. Believers are first *babes* in Christ, little children needing to be supported, guided, protected, preserved from injury, and nourished with the tenderest care. But, with the blessing of God, by careful and prayerful study of the scriptures; by constant attention to all the instructions and devotions of the sanctuary; by close and impartial self-examinations, and prayer; by devout regard to all the duties of the Christian life; and by perseverance in all these means of cultivating holiness; they steadily increase in strength, and wisdom, and spiritual stature. They are babes no longer, but men,

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* 2 Thess. i. 12.
† 1 Pet. ii. 2.
‡ 1 Cor. iii. 1.
§ 1 John ii. 12–14.

strong men, having "overcome the wicked one" and reached an exalted and glorious maturity. Thus it is your privilege, and your duty to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Sanctification, as in the Christian life it exhibits its manifestations and progress, is appropriately called *holy living.*

Than this what subject is more worthy of your profound regard? You must already have perceived that holy living is very different from what many in all ages, have most unhappily imagined. It does not consist, allow me to assure you, in any indifference on your part, to the sublime objects of nature, or of art, which the hand of infinite benevolence has set before you; nor in any peculiarity of language, or dress, or demeanor; nor in the practice of any bodily austerities, or self-inflicted miseries. The tendency of all these is not to promote holiness. Too often, alas! they foster pride, self-righteousness, and hypocrisy. To holy living these superstitions are not congenial. They must always be more or less fatal in their influence. You were created, and are born again, to live among men; to use, and not abuse the blessings of life: and "in every thing to give thanks, and glorify God." Holy living consists not in actions or feelings uncommanded; not in any puerile practices; but in a soul conformed to God; a disposition in consonance with the divine law; a faithful discharge of all the relative duties; and a hearty and spiritual obedience to all the divine commandments and ordinances. He who so lives is "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." He is strong in faith to trust our Lord Jesus Christ, and to labor, and suffer for his cause and people; strong in purpose to resist every evil; strong in understanding to comprehend and appreciate the truth; strong in determination to do all that God has commanded; and strong in principle to follow Christ at whatever hazard, and wherever he may lead the way, "perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

It remains only that we inquire how far perfect sanctification is attainable in the present life.

To restore to believers the image of God lost by sin, is, I have before intimated, the great object. You were originally created like Jehovah in your spiritual essence. Your rational nature exhibits traces of his perfections. But your *glory* consists in the resemblance of his *holiness*. This is your highest excellence, and infinitely superior to the most exalted intellectual or worldly endowments. In the person of Messiah you see what humanity was when it came forth pure from the creating hand, and what it must become to be prepared for his presence in heaven. *You* must be "changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord." This is the consummation to which he teaches you to look. When you shall have gained it you will be beyond the reach of evil. Exalted heights are often ascended by men in the flesh, but absolute perfection on earth is never attained. In the scale of excellence who will pretend to have transcended Paul the apostle, yet he was not perfect. "Not as though I had attained," said he, "either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I also am apprehended of Christ Jesus."* He who imagines himself to have reached perfection must have greatly mistaken both his own heart, and the purity of the Redeemer. Still there are many persons who have indulged this dream! Great blessings, it may be, have been conferred upon them. They have thought much on the subject of a holy life, have prayed much, and in consequence of the many victories they have achieved, have felt a high degree of joy. This joy sometimes, owing as I presume to peculiarities of mental temperament, is sudden, intense, overwhelming. They now imagine themselves perfect. Not being prepared to ana-

* Phil. iii. 12.

lyze their own feelings in regard either to their origin, their nature, or their permanence, it is not a matter of surprise that they fall into serious mistakes, and ascribe to grace entirely, results which are partly at least, due to nature, and especially to physical, and social excitement. Time frequently shows that the sanctification professed under such circumstances, has not all those elements of kindness, of meekness, of forbearance, of fidelity, and inward subjection to Christ which belong to "sinless perfection." The error of this doctrine however which is *most* pernicious, consists not in the question of a mere matter of fact, whether men attain perfection in this life, but in teaching that to be perfection which really is not, but a mere element of antinomianism, and in thus lowering the standard of moral obligation, not only to the ignorant, but even to the present habits of men evidently not the most humble or Christ-like in their dispositions. Shall believers be encouraged to conclude that as soon as they have met with some remarkable manifestations of God's love, and have lived a while, without any known intention to displease him, that they are perfect? Be not, I entreat you, thus deceived. Its results can be only injurious to you, and to others. "If," says John, "we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves."*

There is a point before you, however, and not distant, at which you will be as the angels. Your powers if inferior in strength, will be equally free from pollution, and alike prepared for the sublime devotions of the sanctuary above. No clouds will then intercept the rays of the Sun of Righteousness. No infusion of bitterness will be found in the cup of your joy. When the mysterious hand of *death* shall dissolve your earthly being, and open to you the gates of glory, the work of holiness will be complete, and you will take your place before the eternal throne in unsullied purity.

* 1 John i. 8.

As yet, you have not "attained." Until your deliverance come you will need "the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance." Sorrows will sometimes overtake you, afflictions are the lot of earth, tears will bedew life's pathway, but heaven will heal every woe, and confer every delight.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SALVATION OF BELIEVERS INCLUDES THE RESURRECTION OF THEIR BODIES FROM THE DEAD.

The resurrection considered as a fact; importance of the doctrine; the same body is raised; the glory conferred upon it; all the dead are raised; practical influence of the doctrine.

DEATH is the common destroyer of all men. Everywhere his footsteps are seen. Against his ravages no circumstances or conditions of life afford a defence. He alike prostrates in the dust, to mingle with corruption, and to become the companion of worms, beauty and deformity, youth and age, the lowly and the honored. No man can "give a ransom for his brother." There is no evading the shaft of death. He "will tear away the most ambitious from the heights of all his power; the wealthy from the midst of all his stores; and the voluptuous from the scene of all his pleasures. His ear is insensible to the groans of infancy: and his eye is unmoved by the tears of the mother. He is not to be arrested, or turned aside, by the wailings of innocence, or the outcries of guilt. All are levelled by the same undistinguishing stroke." Death sooner or later, lays them in the cold, dark grave, where they are dissolved, and mingle with their mother earth. "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." But shall the grave remain your prison-house forever? Is there no release from the bonds of the tomb? Salvation includes the *body* as well as the *soul*. The happiness of the one cannot be complete without the other. The *body* must therefore, be delivered from the dominion of the pale monster, come forth from its cerements, be united with

the soul, and live forever. And can it be that the dead shall arise? Shall the long forgotten millions who have peopled our earth, and now lie undistinguished in its soil, be called into new life, and again move and act as before? All the appearances in nature would seem to forbid it. Eagerly as we embrace the conception when once made known, it would certainly never have suggested itself to any mind unenlightened from on high. None of the systems of ancient philosophy, so taught. It is not found in the sacred books of any portion of the pagan world. For the Bible it was reserved to announce to men this precious truth. The divine pages of that holy book, are radiant with the doctrine of the resurrection. It is there stated, and affirmed, and defended, in every form, and in a manner the most plain, and unequivocal. "The dead *shall* be raised."* "There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust."† The *truth of the resurrection*, and the *truth of the word of God* itself, rest on the same foundation. They must stand or fall together.

Than this no doctrine of Christianity is more vitally essential to the faith of believers. He who discredits the resurrection, effectually rejects the Gospel. This will be apparent if you consider for a moment its bearing in the great scheme of redemption. Apart from the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the testimony of his Messiahship is wholly inconclusive. He "was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, but declared to be *the Son of God* with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, *by the resurrection* from the dead."‡ "He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification."§ But "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ, whom he

* 1 Cor. xv. 52.
† Acts xxiv. 15.
‡ Rom. i. 1–4.
§ Rom. iv. 25.

rose not up if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised; and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins. Then they also, who have fallen asleep in Christ, have perished."* All Religion is but a dream! Is Jesus yet in the grave? Then he is not the Son of God; our sins are not pardoned; faith is vain; the apostles were false witnesses; and those who have died trusting in Christ are lost! There is no hope of immortality! From such conclusions we shrink in dismay, and alarm! And did Christ arise? Yes, assuredly. "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept." To his disciples, and others, "he *showed* himself *alive* after his passion, by many *infallible* proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."†

"He rose! He rose! He burst the bars of death!"

But if *He* arose then the reality of the resurrection is established. Others also *may arise.* God raised him, and he has declared that through him he will *raise all* intelligent beings. Paul proposed the inquiry, and I here repeat it:—"Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?"‡ It involves no contradiction. Omnipotence is competent to the result. It is guarantied by his truth. It shall be accomplished. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be" raised from the dead.§ Your resurrection is certain. It is an amazing truth, which casts a new and an additional lustre, even on "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God."

The opinion has been entertained that the doctrine of the resurrection is taught only in the New Testament. Can the advocates of this hypothesis have carefully examined the subject? I presume not. Let us refer to some of the pro-

* 1 Cor. xv. 13–17.
† Acts i. 3.
‡ Acts xxvi. 8.
§ 1 Cor. xv. 22.

phets, and others, and learn the prevalent faith on this point, before the coming of Christ. Isaiah personating Messiah, thus beautifully alludes to the resurrection:—"Thy dead men shall live; together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake, and sing, ye that dwell in dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs; and the earth shall cast out her dead."* Hear also the language of Hosea. By him Christ speaks. "I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death; O death, I will be thy plague; O grave, I will be thy destruction."† The Sadducees who in the days of our Saviour, denied the resurrection, were by the Jews on that account, considered as heretics.‡ At the grave of her brother, Martha said:—"I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day."§ Who with all these testimonies before him, and many others are at hand, can doubt on the subject? The resurrection of the body was evidently held as an article of faith with as much confidence by patriarchs and prophets, as it has since been by the apostles and saints of the Redeemer. It has been a source of the richest joy to the people of God in all ages. Their bodies are "the temples of the Holy Ghost." They are no less his property after death than before. Those who depart "sleep in Jesus." They are precious as his ransomed people; and shall be called forth in beauty, and glory, to dwell in his presence forever.

I next inquire, whether the bodies which shall be raised from the dead, will be the same with these in which we now live. Shall we after that event, have the identical bodies we have at present?

Our bodies, I answer, will be as identical with these we now have, as our souls are with the souls that animated us before our conversion. In our transition from nature to grace, a great and radical change took place in the soul. It

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* Isa. xxvi. 19.
† Hosea xiii. 14.
‡ Matt. xxii. 23.
§ John xi. 24.

was purified. and made spiritual. But it is *the same soul,* both before and after regeneration. In the resurrection a similar and correspondent change will take place in the *body,* still it will be the same body. You place in the earth an uncomely seed, and up springs a beautiful plant. The plant is the same substance *quickened,* that dwelt in the seed. "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body."* It is laid in the grave the image of the first Adam; it is raised from the grave the image of the second Adam, the Lord from heaven. I explain. By a *natural body,* is meant a physical body, dependent upon the support of the animal spirit, governed by the laws of matter, requiring to be repaired by nutrition, composed of solids, and of fluids, and in a constant process of decay, reproduction, and change. This is necessarily, a mortal and corruptible body. To fit it for heaven it must, like the soul, undergo a renovation. Not this body dropped, and another taken, but the same body made spiritual, and incorruptible, shall inherit the kingdom of God. By a spiritual body is meant a body to which the rational soul only, and not the animal spirit, is necessary; a body not subject to the laws of matter; not dependent upon material nutriment; not liable to mutation, or decay; but governed exclusively by the laws of the spiritual world. We shall have then as now, the same soul, and the same body, but they will both be immeasurably exalted. They will be like gold, refined, purified, and wrought into forms of brilliant beauty, but which is the same gold as when alloyed with the dross of its original mine.

I stop not here to reason with philosophical cavillers, who have objected to the doctrine of the resurrection. Physiolo-

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* 1 Cor. xv. 42–44.

gical science, they gravely tell us, has demonstrated that the body is in a constant process of waste and reproduction; and that it cannot be affirmed with scientific accuracy, that the body any man has now, is that which he had ten years ago. He has a series of bodies. Which in the series, they ask with an aspect singularly wise, is to be raised from the dead? Again. The bodies of the dead mingle with the earth, and are formed into vegetable life. These vegetables becoming their nutriment, soon compose parts of animals. These animals are received as food by men, and thus become a portion of their bodies. Thus successive bodies of men are formed of the same matter. How then, they inquire, is the resurrection either physiologically, or physically possible? How *possible?* I appeal to common sense. You know very well that you are now, notwithstanding any physiological changes that may have occurred, the *same man* you were twenty years ago. Does any one tell you that you are not? You pronounce it nonsense. You may perhaps, be overwhelmed with hypercritical reasoning. You may not be able to unravel the thread of your opponent's sophistry. But you cannot discredit your own consciousness. So you will know in the resurrection that you are *still* the same man. And as regards the imagined loss of the body by its intermingling with other bodies! Why not suppose the same thing of the *souls* of men? Why may they not, when no longer connected with the body, fly asunder, and become so intermingled with each other, that they never can be separated and prepared for their respective bodies? Why not presume this of the souls, as well as the bodies of men? It is equally reasonable. To men I may say, in the language of Christ to the Sadducees of his day:—"Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God."* By "the *power of God*," this glorious result is achieved. Is it

* Matt. xxii. 29.

a greater work than our original production? He created from nothing, all things, visible and invisible. Shall presumptuous man dare pronounce impossible, a result pledged by omnipotence? All such objections are puerile. They are positively frivolous.

> "God, my Redeemer, lives,
> And ever from the skies,
> Looks down, and watches o'er my dust,
> Till he shall bid it rise."

The identity of the body of the resurrection is expressly declared by divine revelation. "All that are in their graves shall hear his voice [the voice of the Son of man] and come forth."* This assurance can relate only to the matter of those bodies that were laid in the grave, since only that which was laid in the grave can ever come out of the grave. "*This* corruptible [body] shall put on incorruption, and *this* mortal [body] shall put on immortality."† *This* body that we now have; not another body. *This* body therefore, raised from the dead by the almighty power of the great Creator, becomes as you now fully see, the incorruptible and immortal body of the resurrection.

I have referred to the fact that *all* the dead will be raised from their graves. The wicked must come forth as well as the righteous. This is a measure necessary preparatory to the final decision of all things. "I saw the dead," said John, "small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."‡ "We must *all* appear," says Paul, "before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."§ And Messiah himself avers that, "They

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* John v. 28.
† 1 Cor. xv. 53.
‡ Rev. xx. 12.
§ 2 Cor. v. 10.

that have done good [shall arise] unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."* How fearful this great truth to the ungodly! How can the unpardoned, when they shall stand before the throne of God, bear the shame of their sins! How, the contempt which their wickedness will bring upon them! Horrible unspeakably their destiny!

> "———— On their brow
> The thunder scars are graven; from their eyes
> Glares forth the immortality of hell."

But the sanctified go up with abounding joy. Now they are free. They are free in soul, and free from all bodily imperfections. Not as here will they then appear, some in childhood, and some in hoary age, some maimed, and others in the vigor of strength. All will be like our Lord Jesus Christ, who "shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself."† Surprising consummation! "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, [how exalted, how clothed with dignity and honor] but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."‡

A word in regard to the *time* of the resurrection. It is yet in the future. "There *shall be* a resurrection of the dead." It is fixed as an event of *the last day.* "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye *at the last trump,* for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised."§ "This," said Christ, "is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the *last day;*" and "that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at *the last*

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* John v. 29.
† Phil. iii. 20, 21.
‡ 1 John iii. 2.
§ 1 Cor. xv. 52.

day."* The body, I have said, must be restored, and with the soul made immortal. Individual instances of resurrection have already occurred. Christ arose; some of the pious dead arose with him; but the general resurrection is reserved for "*the last day*." Then shall come forth into new being all who have ever lived upon earth. "Death, the last enemy shall be destroyed." Every sepulchre shall be opened, and every human being shall revive. Christ shall descend from the Mediatorial throne. The universe shall be assembled. The final sentence be pronounced. The wicked shall depart, and the righteous take their harps of gold. Hear you the harmony of that song? It swells from the bosom of millions of the redeemed! It is like the voice of many waters! It tells of time expired, and of a happy eternity, beyond the reach of evil, or of change!

We have now seen that the resurrection of the body is a glorious truth; that it is an essential article in the system of divine grace; that the bodies we now have are the same that will be raised from the grave, and rendered glorious and happy forever; and that the resurrection embraces all the dead, both the wicked and the righteous. We close with a brief reference to the practical influence of the doctrine, upon believers in Christ.

Are *you* ready for the great day of the resurrection? Do you look to that day with trembling joy? There you will receive perfect and eternal life. Those you have loved and lost on earth, heaven will give back to your embraces. Come then, death. Let his ravages sever every fondly cherished tie. Let him strike our own hearts. We shall soon be beyond the reach of his power. The dissolution of the flesh, and the putrescence of the grave, lose their loathsomeness, when it is remembered that they are a part of the process by which our bodies are purified, and fitted for the skies. We shall go

* John vi. 39, 40.

down cheerfully into the dark valley, assured that we will not long be detained there. A short sojourn, and the iron dominion will be broken. In Christ we shall stand firmly. We will not shrink. Come the day of judgment, we will meet it without alarm. The clangor of the last trumpet shall but awaken our deep slumbers, and bring us to eternal blessedness! All will be complete. Restoration will be perfect! "This corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality. Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

CHAPTER XII.

SALVATION COMMENCES IN THIS LIFE, AND PROGRESSES UNTIL IT IS PERFECTED IN HEAVEN.

Extent to which salvation is accomplished at conversion; at the death of the body; at the resurrection; its consummation in heaven.

SALVATION is the great theme of the believer; the end to which all his efforts are directed; the consummation of his highest hopes. I observe prevailing among men, a strong disposition to regard salvation as belonging wholly to the future. We accustom ourselves to speak of it as a boon to be obtained when we shall have left this world. Salvation will not, it is true, until our departure hence, be perfect. Indeed, not until then, will it be indubitably certain. Deceptions meet us everywhere. We may be resting our hopes upon the clouds of error. But if we are really in Christ Jesus by faith, salvation has been, to some extent, already conferred. Isaiah beautifully sings:—"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation; he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness."* With us personally, the renewal of our nature is the beginning of the actual work, which is to result in our ultimate deliverance from every evil, and the bestowment upon us of immortal happiness. "He that believeth on me, [said Messiah] hath everlasting life."†

To what extent, let us in the first place, inquire, is salvation accomplished at conversion?

* Isa. lxi. 10. † John vi. 47.

Previously to the communication of spiritual life, you were the willing slave of sin! You loved the world, and adhered to its maxims, and its pleasures. Neither the threatenings, nor the admonitions of Jehovah, deterred you from transgressing his laws. Nor were you allured to the Saviour by all the surprising exhibitions of his love and mercy! Such was your moral attitude. You were alienated from God. You were under the curse. You were lost. You followed freely, perseveringly, the desires and imaginations of your own evil heart. Salvation did not occupy your thoughts. It was far from you. In the boundlessness of his grace, our heavenly Father was pleased, for the sake of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, to give you repentance of sin, and faith in the Redeemer. Now you were "born of the Spirit;" and "rejoiced in hope of the glory of God." Your nature was changed, and with it were changed all your spiritual relations. Your relations to the *world* were changed, which you heartily renounced; to the *law*, the condemnation of which was revoked; and to *God*, of whom you became a son, and an heir through Christ. The alarms, agitations, and anxieties attendant upon your conversion, passed away, and your bosom was filled with confidence and peace. Then you imagined that you would fall into darkness no more! The seductions of sense; the temptations of Satan; the spirit of the world; could you ever again give to them your ear, or your heart? You did not believe it. The language of your soul was:—

> "Jesus, I my cross have taken,
> All to leave, and follow thee."

I congratulate you. I rejoice with you. "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift." Your heart leaps with the bright and cheering prospect spread out before you! But be not too confident. Many an hour of darkness yet awaits you; many a scene of suffering, and of peril. Have you supposed that nothing more is necessary than to permit

events to glide on smoothly, to a happy termination? Why then, the admonition which comes to you from on high:—"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling?" Is there no danger that you may tire, and faint by the way? None that you may falter from any other cause? To what does Jehovah refer when he says, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him?"

At conversion, you were pardoned, justified, and saved from the dominion of depravity, the curse of the law, and the guilt of sin. Then the love of God was shed abroad in your heart as an impulse to all holy action, and an earnest of your future inheritance. To this extent only, has your salvation been perfected. You have entered simply, upon the theatre of spiritual life. All its scenes are yet to be acted. The infant is born. It must hereafter acquire stature and strength. The pupil has entered the school of Christ, and may now advance in the knowledge and practice of holiness. The racer has entered the lists for the prize. He has yet to run his course, before he obtains the crown. The soldier has taken his position in the ranks of the King of kings. He must now fight and conquer. Conversion is no more the whole of religion, than birth is the whole of life; than being enrolled in the school is the sum of your exertions in pursuit of knowledge; than taking your place in the course is the race you engage to run; than enlisting as a soldier is all you have to do in the war. Should you instantly, when the heart is renewed, be taken from the earth, you would go, I doubt not, safely, and triumphantly, to glory. But if you remain still for a season upon earth, you must pass through those trials, of which all the faithful in Christ Jesus are invariably partakers.

Conversion raises you from the dust where until that event, you lay prostrate, places you erect in an attitude of defence, and puts into your hands the weapons of your warfare. Now you begin the conflict, and the battle will rage on through

every step of your progress, until you reach "that land of which the Lord hath said, I will give it you." Mark the glowing exhortation of Paul to the Ephesians, and tell me whether less than this, can with any propriety, be inferred? "My brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always, with all prayer, and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance."* No indication is here or elsewhere given, that at conversion you have gained the final victory. But thanks be to God, complete success is guarantied to the faithful. Are *you* carried permanently away by the adversaries of your salvation, overcome, taken captive? The proof is positive that you are after all, a stranger to divine grace! You have wholly mistaken your own character. Go then, and begin, at once, the great work. You have not a moment to lose. If however, you are determined by the grace of God to press onward still, if you cannot renounce your hope, the struggles through which you must pass will be protracted, and often most painful, but they will be attended by no ultimate evils. On the con-

* Eph. vi. 10–18.

trary, they will add to your strength, your firmness, and your confidence, since they will be but so many trials of your faith, your patience, and your love. You will come out of them all but the purer, and the brighter. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I [said the Redeemer] will give thee a crown of life." The fiercer the contest the more fully may you glorify God on earth, and the better will you be prepared to enter upon your final reward.

I am now prepared to inquire, secondly, how far your salvation will have advanced, at the death of the body?

The last summons comes. You are laid in the tomb. Your spirit goes up to God. By these events you have gained a new, and more exalted position. Is not your salvation now perfect? Very far from it. At the death of the body you have the certainty of eternal life. Doubts, and fears, and dangers, if they have accompanied you thus far, all expire on the borders of the grave. They go with you not a step beyond. "I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write: blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors: and their works do follow them."* You rest. Your labors are all finished. Satan, the world, the flesh, all have been vanquished. Your last battle is fought. Your armor is ungirded, and laid aside, never to be resumed. You have "overcome by the blood of the Lamb," and are now amidst the shining ranks on high! Saved! Forever happy! And your salvation not yet perfected? What still remains? The *soul* only is glorified. The *body* also, is the purchase of the Saviour's blood. But this part of your being, your body, where is it? Penetrate the gloomy dominions of death. Behold the ghastly tyrant there, "seated upon his throne of skulls!" See, your body is trampled beneath his feet! It is yet in *dishonor!* It is

* Rev. xiv. 13.

yet the victim of *mortality*. I grant that at *death* the believer rises "fresh as morning,"—

> "And soars untrodden heights, and is at home,
> Where angels bashful look;"

Still he is but *half* saved. A glorious work, demanding the exercise of omnipotence, remains to be achieved.

Your salvation, I now remark, thirdly, cannot be perfected until the resurrection of the body, and its reunion with the soul.

The presence of the body, and its participation in eternal joy, is positively essential. I repudiate the sad, the melancholy conclusion, that the soul remains during all that period which elapses from the death of the body to its resurrection, in a state of comparative insensibility. The thought is most painful, and repulsive. It is in evident opposition to the teachings of the word of God. The body truly is absent, yet all the powers of your spirit are full of activity, and life. Did not Moses, whose body was then reposing in the distant land of Moab, as well as Elias, appear to the disciples as "upon the holy mount" they descended and talked with Messiah?* To the penitent thief upon the cross, the dying Saviour said:—"To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise."† Paul assures us that "to be absent from the body," is to "be present with the Lord."‡ In Christ's parable of the rich man and Lazarus, he represents both as being in a state of the highest consciousness, acting and speaking with regard to themselves, and others.§ In the book of Revelations "the spirits of the just made perfect," are continually in our view, and ever appear filled with animation and feeling. The soul in a state of comparative insensibility from the death until the resurrection of the body! It cannot be. The scriptures teach us, and we gladly believe them, that the contrary is true. The soul is all conscious-

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* Matt. xvii. 3.
† Luke xxiii. 43.
‡ 2 Cor. v. 6–8.
§ Luke xxi. 19–31.

ness. It is happy in the paradise of God. And regarding the body, the preparatory measures for its full deliverance are all taken. The purposes of Jehovah, one after another, are completed. The last day dawns upon our world. What do we now behold? Messiah, with millions of his angels, comes in the clouds of heaven! The trumpet of the Archangel sounds! Its clangor reverberates through all the skies. See! Every sepulchre is laid open, and at the command of Christ forth come all the saints in teeming millions. They awake from the tombs clothed in immortal beauty. The living are changed. About the Redeemer in countless multitudes they cluster! Now their souls and their bodies are reunited. In their presence the sun in mid heaven loses his brightness! His light is no more necessary. They ascend and take the mansions prepared for them, from the foundation of the world. "So shall they be ever with the Lord." Time ceases. Eternity alone remains! "Death is swallowed up in victory!" *Your salvation is perfect!*

Thus have we briefly traced the salvation of believers in its several stages. We have seen to what extent it is completed at the conversion of the soul; how far it has advanced at the death of the body; and that it is not perfect until the resurrection, when God shall again unite the body and the soul, and you shall assume your place at the right hand of the throne on high.

Shall I, in conclusion, attempt to speak of the happiness to which perfect salvation will exalt you? The essay would be vain. Mortal thought is too feeble to grasp the conception. How then, can words express it? Let it suffice to say that all evil is past, and every sorrow healed. Pain, disquiet, vexation, labor, have been forgotten. All that is gross, earthly, or corruptible have been removed. And you wear the image, and rejoice in the glory, of our Lord Jesus Christ. Your dwelling place is radiant with immortal light and beauty. Your companions! Who are they? How

intellectual! How exalted! And each perfectly fitted, and disposed to augment the happiness of every other. Among them are the holy angels. Above all, there is our Lord Jesus Christ himself. He is the ineffable fountain from which flows forth forever a flood of brightness, filling heaven with inconceivable bliss. Thus pure, and exalted are you in yourself; such is your dwelling place, and your society; and you reflect the glory of God, as a diamond does the beams of the sun. O, the infinitude of the reward which God will bestow upon them that love him!

> "———— With a shout,
> Loud as from numbers without number, sweet
> As from blest voices uttering joy, heaven rings
> With jubilee, and loud Hosannas fill
> The eternal regions."

CHAPTER XIII.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.

Recapitulation; exhortation; importance of fidelity.

I now close the consideration of the subject which has occupied your attention in the preceding pages. The topics which I regarded as most necessary to its proper understanding in all its parts, and relations, have been successively brought in review. I briefly recapitulate.

We took our position in the beginning, upon the impregnable truth that "the scriptures reveal, fully and perfectly, the way of salvation." They are the word of God. In them he communicates all that it is necessary for us to know, in regard to himself, to our own spiritual state, our redemption by his Son Jesus Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, and the whole process by which we are delivered from sin, and obtain everlasting life. Thus the subject was introduced, and through every step of our subsequent progress, we have been guided, not by the opinions of men, but exclusively by "the oracles" of Jehovah. Directed by the light of his truth, we have looked into the *condition* of man, and found that by nature, he is depraved and criminal, and that unless purified from his corruptions, his salvation is impossible. Heaven is the abode only of holiness, but we are unholy, and while we so remain, must continue incapable of its joys. Still more. We are offenders against the law of God, and can consequently, never, unless our offences are removed, meet its approval. In the estimation of perfect justice we must be pronounced guilty. We have also examined the *nature of the divine*

and seen how they enter into the conditions of our personal union with the Redeemer, and at the same time illustrate the great doctrine of salvation by grace. But the pardon of sins, is not enough. To make us capable of salvation, something more is required. *Our* nature *must be changed and purified.* This is done in the regeneration of the soul, which is, we have seen, as is also our subsequent sanctification, the work of the Holy Ghost, the third person in the ever adorable Trinity. With the work of the Spirit, we have surveyed attentively, the nature of his influences, special and ordinary, the means he employs in conversion, and the results which invariably follow his presence and blessing. Thus we have seen, as I trust satisfactorily, that we are saved, not by the law, nor by any works of righteousness of our own, but by the grace of the Father, the satisfaction of the Son received by faith, and the regeneration and sanctification of the Holy Spirit.

Having thus shown you the medium of your recovery from sin, and reinstatement into the favor of our Heavenly Father, I have next designated some of the most important of the *privileges* of believers, and referred especially, to the pardon of sins, to justification, to adoption as the children and heirs of God, to the accessibility to believers of the divine promises, to the sustaining power of hope, and the perseverance of the righteous in grace to the attainment of final and complete salvation. From the privileges, we turned to consider the *duties* of believers, but not until we had described as clearly as possible, the many and varied forms of deception to which religious professors and others, are perpetually exposed, and had shown by what means these deceptions may all be detected, and either entirely avoided, or successfully overcome. To the duties of believers we have referred in general terms, but have taken occasion to dwell more especially upon those involving your confession of Christ before men, for which baptism, and the

law, and seen that although "holy, just, and good," in itself, it is inadequate as a means of our deliverance. To those who have never violated its commands, it secures unalloyed happiness. But we are not of that favored number. Therefore we inherit not its blessings, but only its curses. Nor is there in the law any provision made for our pardon. From this quarter there is no hope. How then, can the sinner be saved?

In answer to this infinitely important inquiry, I have directed your thoughts to our Lord Jesus Christ. In him "a new and living way" is opened, and salvation freely offered to every believer. We have contemplated his character, and seen that he is the promised Messiah, and the eternal God: his satisfaction to divine justice in our behalf, is perfect; and he is our glorious Intercessor at the right hand of the Father in heaven. Perfect however, as is the satisfaction made by Messiah, it does not, we have further seen, avail for our salvation, until it is so applied as to purify us individually, from sin, and make us partakers of his infinite merits. How can this be done? How can his satisfaction be a satisfaction by us? To this end, a personal union with him must exist. He and his people must in the estimation of the law, be one, and indivisible. And such by a gracious and divine arrangement, the Gospel makes, and regards them. All who truly believe in him, are one with him. Their sins are accounted as his sins, and his merits and righteousness are accounted their merits and righteousness. Thus we are saved from the curse of the law, and thus we obtain forgiveness of sins. This boon, we have said, is conferred only upon those who *believe in our Lord Jesus Christ*. It is immeasurably important then, that we should know certainly, what it is which constitutes true faith in him. What is it to believe in Christ? To this inquiry we have fully responded; and have examined in connection with it, the nature of conviction of sin, of prayer, and of repentance,

Lord's Supper, were expressly designed. In connection with these, I have endeavored to enforce the obligations which rest upon all who believe, to unite formally, with the visible Church of Christ upon earth, and of which union I have recounted some of the most important advantages. We have considered the great doctrine of sanctification; and have also seen that the body as well as the soul, is included in the salvation of the believer. In conclusion, we have traced salvation in the several stages of its progress, and have seen to what extent it is accomplished at the conversion of the soul, how far it has advanced at the death of the body, and that it will not be perfected until the great day of resurrection, when God shall reunite the soul and body of all his saints, and they shall take their crowns in the kingdom on high,

"And stand accepted in the Father's sight!"

Throughout the whole of these discussions, I have sought with much prayer and labor, not to fatigue you with metaphysical subtleties, prolixity of argument, or any unnecessary detail, but to lead you onward by easy steps, and in the simplest manner, to the full possession of that knowledge I have desired to communicate. Do you now understand the way of salvation? Is it, as a whole, and in all its parts, plain to your mind? Permit I pray you, no obscurity to hide any portion of it from your view. If your conceptions are confused, what guaranty can you have that you may not be in error upon the whole subject? How can your faith be firm and unwavering, if your knowledge is seriously defective? These are "first principles," about which I would not have you always circling. Possess yourself of these principles fully, and then "go on to perfection." This is necessary to your safety, to your Christian enjoyment, and to your usefulness as a follower of Christ.

And are you a follower of Christ, truly and faithfully? Can it be that you are not? Not a follower of Christ!

Careless in respect to the claims of God, and the demands of your own spiritual and eternal interests! What, destined to exist forever, and yet indifferent whether in another world, you inherit misery or happiness! In the broad way to everlasting death, and reluctant to turn from it to the joys of the blessed! O can it be that you are thus blinded, thus fatally deluded! For the wealth, the honors, the pleasures of this life, you are bartering your immortal soul! Horrible thought! Christ Jesus invites you to come to him and live, but you will not! You perhaps promise yourself that you will ere long. But time is rapidly passing. Soon it will be too late! What warrant have you that your life will be continued another week? Yet upon its precarious tenure what boundless results are suspended! O how fearful is your risk! Do not, I entreat you, longer hesitate, or delay. "I pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

But I must assume that you are not indifferent. You are at least, desirous to be a true and devoted Christian. Do you abhor your depravity and transgressions? Do you perceive something of the beauty of holiness, and the fulness of grace that is in our Lord Jesus Christ? Do you deeply lament your distance from God, and holiness? Cultivate these, and all similar feelings of your heart, with the most careful assiduity. Diligently study the divine word, and compare with its holy requirements every emotion of your soul. Give yourself wholly, unreservedly to Christ. Constantly implore his blessing, and the sanctification and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Permit no consideration to divert you from the Gospel of the Redeemer, but give to it in every respect, a full and hearty obedience. In all this persevere unwaveringly, and you cannot be unsuccessful. "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

But you are I trust, a confirmed, an assured believer;

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